- Five farm subsidy scams you can learn at home
- News chain nixes Wingo, nabs Pulitzers
- Reviews by James Fallows, Nicholas Lemann, and Steven Waldman

The Washington Monthly

SEPTEMBER 1987/$3.00

CHARMING HER WAY TO THE WHITE HOUSE

Air travel stinks, auto safety's a joke—and Washington still loves Liddy Dole.

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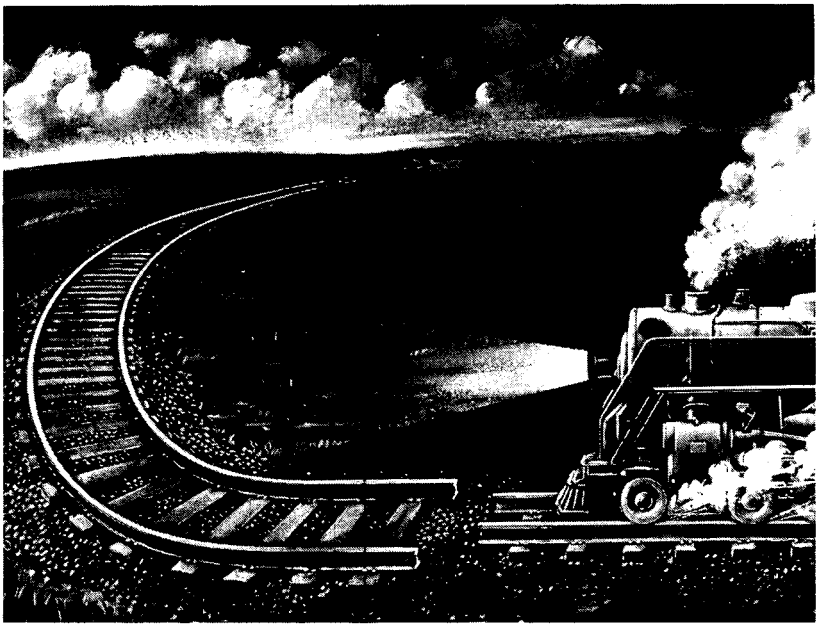
Issues of the Information Age:

The way beyond Babel.



Imagine trying to build a railroad system if every locomotive manufacturer used a different track gauge. Every local stretch of railroad had its own code of signals. And in order to ride a train, you needed to know the gauges and the signals and the switching procedures and the route and the conductor's odd pronunciation of the station names.

The business of moving and managing information is in a similar state today. Machines can't always talk to each other. Proprietary systems and networks abound, with suppliers often jockeying to make theirs the de facto standard. The enormous potential of the Information Age is being dissipated by incompatibility.

The solution, as we see it, is common standards, which would allow electronic systems in one or many locations to work together. People will be informed and in control, while the systems exchange, process, and act on information automatically.

AT&T is working with national, international, and industry-wide organizations to set up comprehensive, international standards, to be shared by everyone who uses and provides information technology. We think it's time for everyone in our industry to commit to developing firm, far-reaching standards. The goal: to provide our customers with maximum flexibility and utility. Then, they can decide how and with whom to work.

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LETTERS

Assistant's Assistant

Your "Tilting at Windmills" piece concerning the "Happy Worker" [June] brought to mind a question. Awhile back I tuned my television to C-Span and discovered a Senate subcommittee hearing dealing with FAA matters. Testifying was a gentleman whose title was associate administrator for administration. That got me to thinking that where there is an associate anything there must be an assistant. So there must also be an assistant administrator for administration. Following naturally is the fact that every administrator must have an administrative assistant. Thus, is it not a fact that somewhere in the great American government machine there exists an administrative assistant to the assistant administrator for administration?

STEVEN D. RITTENMEYER
Macomb, Illinois

Bitter Memories

Milton Viorst says in your June issue ["The Kissinger Covenant and Other Reasons Israel is in Trouble"]:

> Kissinger filled the gap with a private letter promising America's approval of any response to terrorism that Israel might choose to make. The letter set no limits. To Israel, the letter constituted a promise that no future president would withhold American economic or military assistance as punishment for antiterrorist reprisals.

Questions. How can the policies of one president bind another, even of the same party, should that president be of a different persuasion about some issues? Viorst says it, but do the astute Israeli leaders really believe that the Kissinger private letter "constituted a promise that *no future president* [emphasis added] would withhold American economic or military assistance"?

WILLIAM SIMPSON
Park Forest, Illinois

Considering that he is Jewish, Milton Viorst displays an astounding lack of understanding of Israel and much of world Jewry. The most important dynamic feeding Israeli "aggression" is not "The Kissinger Covenant" but mistrust of the Gentile world. Many Israelis, remember, are either Holocaust survivors or their relatives. Their bitter memories of Western complacency and complicity in genocide before and during the Holocaust causes mistrust of the West's intentions, as does the entire legacy of Western anti-Semitism. After the Sabra and Shatila incidents, for example, Menachem Begin, who barely escaped Nazi-occupied Poland, summed up the feelings of many Jews: "Goyim [gentiles] kill goyim, and they blame the Jews."

Nor has Israeli history improved the image of Western Gentiles in Jewish eyes. In 1948, no major Western democracy was willing to provide Israel with arms, while the Arabs were armed to the teeth. In 1957, Israel withdrew from Suez with American assurances that the U.S. would protect her in case of a future Arab attack. In the spring of 1967, with an Arab attack imminent, Johnson informed the Israelis that he was too involved with Vietnam to live up to the agreement.

Meanwhile, France, which had been Israel's main arms supplier, inexplicably cut off all weapons shipments to Israel, even those already paid for. Israel had to face the onslaught alone. In 1973, Kissinger held up emergency arms shipments to Israel during the Yom Kippur War in order to soften her up for peace negotiations. Hundreds of Israelis, meanwhile, died unnecessarily.

In a cynical world, Israelis have learned to deal cynically with West Bank Arabs, South Africans, and others. More humanistic policies would help Israel regain popularity among Viorst and his progressive friends. Israelis, however, would rather be unpopular and survive than have Viorst and his ilk crying at their funerals.

DAVID BERNSTEIN
Boston, Massachusetts

Milton Viorst replies:

Except by war, a sovereign state cannot be forced to keep the terms of any obligation, even a fully ratified treaty. That said, it is also true that a commitment made by a president of the United States is considered binding on his successors. As Mr. Bernstein points out above, President Eisenhower made a promise to Israel in 1957 to maintain the freedom of navigation through the Strait of Tiran. In 1967, President Johnson acknowledged it to be a valid commitment, as I point out in my book; but he claimed that because of the nation's involvement in Vietnam, he was unable to

A Plea—

To our long-time subscribers:

Over the years, in responding to requests for back issues, we have completely depleted our supply of certain issues. So, as the holiday gift-giving spirit fast approaches, we ask you to dig into those unopened boxes from three residences ago and dust off those old issues to see if you have any of these:

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1983—January, February, March, April

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fulfill it. This default led directly to the Six Day War. A nation's commitment is only as good as its sense of moral obligation. There is no international enforcement process.

Mr. Bernstein makes a valid point. May I remind him that what *The Washington Monthly* published was an excerpt of my book, *Sands of Sorrow*. I refer him to the full text, where I believe he would find that I address rather fully the complex issues he raises. As for Mr. Bernstein's snide conclusion, my fear is that in the absence of what he designates "humanistic policies" (I prefer to call it common sense), we will both cry at Israel's funeral.

Pistol-Packin' Patsies

In Josh Sugarmann's article on gun control ["The NRA is Right," June], he does a disservice to all of us who believe in handgun control. The headline and then his attack on Handgun Control Inc. negates his otherwise persuasive arguments in favor of handgun control.

Why can't the associations get together? We need a united front to offset the money and congressional lobbying power of the NRA. Otherwise we are patsies for them.

IRVING ENNA
Portland, Oregon

Gas Pains

In the June edition you've stubbed your fact-asserting toe ["From the People Who Brought You the Twinkie Defense," Blake Fleetwood]. The casual reference to "the Dow Chemical catastrophe in Bhopal, India" is, by most accounts, indisputably incorrect.

Most of the media, and some highly charged (and charging) plaintiffs' attorneys contend that it was a Union Carbide plant that lost its load of methyl isocyanate, not Dow.

BILL LEATHERS
Strongsville, Ohio

The editors reply:

This embarrassing mistake was entirely an editing error. Sorry, Dow.

No Losers

I am writing in regards to Paul Savage's review of *G.I.—The American Soldier in World War II* by Lee Kennett [June].

I do not believe Savage was correct in characterizing we combat infantrymen of World War II as the "dregs" of the Army. It is not true and gives the impression we served in the infantry simply because the Army had nothing else we were capable of.

The Washington Monthly

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A CURRENT AMERICAN WONDER

If you lived at the end of the line, you'd probably think having electric current is something special.

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I must admit I cannot recall any Doughs in my platoon with master's degrees or PhDs, or, for that matter, bachelor's degrees. But many, too many, were with the platoon barely long enough for me to get their names before they were killed or wounded.

We so-called "dregs" of the 9th Division sustained 23,317 battle casualties. In one ten-day period, October 6-16, 1944, two regiments, the 39th and 60th, suffered 4,500 casualties in the Huertgen Forest. The "dregs" that remained were still fighting when relieved.

I can recall instances when hiking up a road and hearing calls such as "suckers" or "losers" from some passing vehicle, but I cannot recall ever being called the "dregs" of an Army.

The men I served with were the finest, most selfless persons I have ever met in my life. I cannot count the times I saw a man risk his life to protect another soldier whom in many cases he did not even know.

It truly saddens me that so many will be given the impression that the infantrymen of World War II were a group of semi-retarded individuals the government used as cannon fodder in the front lines, while brighter, more productive men were saved for posterity. It is not true.

W.J. CALDWELL
Largo, Florida

Charles Peters replies:

Since I was in the infantry during WWII, it is not surprising that I definitely don't think we were the dregs.

Rate Rancor

Paul Glastris's review of Jeffrey H. Birnbaum and Alan S. Murray's *Showdown at Gucci Gulch* ["Inside Tax Reform," June] provides a useful view of the passage of the Tax Reform Act of 1986. Still, when it looks forward instead of backward, the review contains an error of fact, a resulting error of interpretation, and a crowning unfortunate policy prescription. Senator Bill Bradley's "Fair Tax" did indeed involve no change in government revenue and no change in the income distribution. This was a rhetorical device to separate the issue of tax reform from the associated but separate questions of the size and distribution of the tax burden. There was every anticipation that, if entangled with those questions, tax reform would never see the light of day, but that if it attained serious consideration on its own merits, tax reform would likely raise those other questions as well.

But Glastris is wrong in his assertion that the Treasury and the Congress followed Bradley's expositional approach. Both of the Treasury proposals and the Tax Reform Act of 1986 raised taxes on corporations, a step toward greater progressivity, and then distributed those additional revenues among individuals in a progressive way, with the largest tax cuts in percentage terms for those with the lowest incomes. As Glastris says at one point in his review but contradicts at another, the result is a more progressive tax law—as had been expected even from Bradley's "distributionally neutral" proposal. Glastris is therefore incorrect when he concludes that tax reform, in reducing the highest marginal tax rate, implicitly accepted the loopholes created over the past three decades.

Finally, it is unrealistic to assume that the Congress and the public would tolerate the old law's tax rates, or anything like them, without the old law's preferences. The loopholes were an intended compensation for the high tax rates, not an accidental violation of a realistic standard of progressivity stated by the marginal tax rates. The proof is readily at hand; even the "pro-middle class, soak the rich" amendment of Senator George Mitchell made the most egregious concession right up front with its reinstatement of the capital gains exclusion. Therefore, Glastris's and Robert Reich's proposal to raise substantially the maximum tax rate misses the entire point of the campaign for tax reform. Such efforts would not renew the spirit of shared sacrifice, but rather send us back to a near-voluntary tax code for the wealthy and powerful that would again be the antithesis of any notion of social responsibility.

JOSEPH J. MINARIK
Reston, Virginia

Paul Glastris replies:

I admire Mr. Minarik; when he worked at the Congressional Budget Office, he had a hand in helping Senator Bradley formulate "Fair Tax." What he says about tax reform and income distribution is correct. But what I wrote is not wrong; he is simply overstating my case to make it seem so. Tax reform proposals did get somewhat more progressive as the legislation moved through the process. They also retained Bradley's strategy of not using tax reform to alter income distribution in a major way. Given that the rates the rich as a whole *actually* pay are about the same now as before tax reform, but substantially lower than 20 years ago, I don't see how he can avoid the conclusion that tax reform was an implicit surrender to the previous incursions of lobbyists, lawyers, and accountants.

It may be unrealistic to assume Congress would tolerate the old rates without preferences; then again, most people thought tax reform itself was unrealistic. As to the public, if Minarik means *all* citizens, as opposed to rich citizens, then he's wrong—a more progressive tax code is precisely what opinion polls consistently show the majority of Americans prefer. If politicians put in tax preferences as "intended compensation" for high rates, they normally do so quietly, meanwhile selling "the public" on the notion that such breaks create incentives that are good for the economy and society.

Finally, I hope the point of tax reform was how shared sacrifice benefits us all, and not the notion Minarik seems to hold, that by lowering rates we've taken away the incentive of the wealthy and powerful to find ways to weasel out of paying their fair share. Until the top rate approaches zero, the Gucci boys will continue to have plenty of eager clients.

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CONTENTS

Volume Nineteen, Number Eight September 1987

Tilting at Windmills
by Charles Peters
Doctors on welfare....*three* minesweepers....Armand Hammer's medical bills....playground chic....and other odds and ends.... 6

Green Thumbs: The PiK and Roll and Other Scams from the Farm Belt
Jeffrey L. Pasley
The ingenious ways farmers milk government subsidy programs. 11

Hot Chain Nixes Wingo, Buscapades —Nabs Pulitzers, Big Bucks
by Matthew Cooper
Knight-Ridder shows that newspaper chains can be profitable—and good. 17

AFL-CIO is Spanish for Union-Busting
by Frank Smyth
How the U.S. and big labor fight communism by opposing popular unions and setting up unpopular ones. 24

Charming Her Way to the White House
by Philip Weiss
Air travel stinks, auto safety's a joke—and Washington still loves Liddy Dole 29

ON POLITICAL BOOKS

Making McKinley Sexy
by Steven Waldman
Gore Vidal's fiction is fun and accurate. Too bad his non-fiction is reckless and annoying. 45

Sex and Drugs and Heidegger
by Jacob Weisberg
Allan Bloom picks the wrong enemies, the right solutions, and gives up hope too soon. 49

Manila Fudge
by James Fallows
How the U.S. tries to have it both ways in the Philippines. 53

Political Booknotes
Reviews by **Robert D. Kaplan, Dan Farber, Peter Mooney, Juan Williams,** and **Nicholas Lemann.** 58

LETTERS 1
WHO'S WHO 27
MONTHLY JOURNALISM AWARD 54
POLITICAL PUZZLE 44
TIDBITS AND OUTRAGES 23
MEMO OF THE MONTH 28

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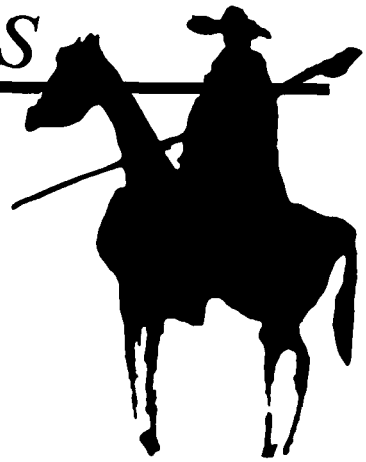
TILTING AT WINDMILLS



Charles M. Carberry, the prosecutor who has led the government's investigation on insider trading on Wall Street, is resigning in the middle of the investigation to join a private law firm. Would Pete Rose desert his team in the middle of the World Series?...

It may not be the Invasion of the Body Snatchers, but if I were Japanese I would be apprehensive about this report:

"Tokyo, May 21 (AP)—Three Americans today became the first foreign lawyers permitted to practice in Japan."

Since I am American, however, I must confess to being delighted by the news. This could be our secret weapon in the trade war. If the Japanese people can be induced to spend half their time in court suing and arguing, as we Americans do, they'll produce only half as many of those Sonys and Hondas....

Who are the biggest welfare cheats? No, the correct answer is not unwed mothers. It's doctors, according to Richard Kusserow, the inspector general of the Department of Health and Human Services. Among the examples he recently gave Amy Bayer of *The Washington Times*:

" • An ophthalmologist in Ohio who billed Medicare $90,000 for eye operations he did not perform.

" • Ohio podiatrists who billed the government $500,000 for 'foot surgery' that consisted of nothing more than cutting the patients' skin and sewing it closed."

Further heartening news about the medical profession comes from a recent study of the records of more than 2,000 autopsies that found, according to the *Journal of the American Medical Association*, that 34 percent of the patients had been misdiagnosed. This helps explain why physicians are requesting fewer autopsies these days. They don't want to be sued for malpractice....

I invite you to ponder the implications of the fact that the following tax tip appeared not in the *The Wall Street Journal* or *Business Week* but in the July 1987 issue of *Progressive Farmer*:

"Many couples write spousal wills that leave their entire estate to the surviving spouse. That frees $600,000 of an estate from taxes. But on the death of the surviving spouse, only the $600,000 remains tax free.

"There's a simple way to double that for the second beneficiary. Each spouse's will leaves all to other beneficiaries. Result: $1.2 million can pass tax-free from the second spouse's estate."

I'm certainly willing to concede that there are some family farmers who need and deserve our help, but if American farmers in general

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are in the bad shape they've been telling us they're in, why does *Progressive Farmer* think its average reader is interested in how to pass along $1.2 million estates?...

Rep. Jack Brooks told Admiral Poindexter, "You wanted to exclude all the elected officials from knowledge of some of the most important and far-reaching areas of foreign policy.... Is this not precisely the kind of thing that our Founding Fathers were trying to prevent when the Constitution placed the authority and the accountability for these decisions in both the Congress and the president?"

My fear is that a large number of Americans will not see that what Poindexter did was wrong. They see politicians as objects of scorn. On the other hand, they see career military officers like Poindexter and North as dedicated patriots. Those in the career service—civilian or military—are generally thought of, and think of themselves, as morally superior to politicians. This attitude, which, in the cases of North and Poindexter, is now deeply painful to liberals, can in considerable part be traced to the contempt for politicians that has for many years been manifested by most liberal journalists and political scientists....

Bork is another case where liberals' arguments may come back to bite them. When a president appoints a conservative like G. Harold Carswell, liberals argue that he should emphasize intellectual competence, not ideology. So when the president nominates a conservative who happens to be intellectually competent, the liberals have difficulty knowing what to say next. The fact is that the president does have a right to nominate judges whose ideas he likes. But the Senate also has the right not to confirm judges whose ideas it doesn't like. It is perfectly proper for the debate to be in ideological terms. If the president wants to be sure to win, he should help his party gain control of the Senate....

Veteran readers of the *Monthly* will know why I was delighted to see this headline in the July 22 *New York Times*:

Abrams Is Asked
To Take Oath
at House Hearing

For new readers, I can explain why simply by citing an exchange that took place on July 8 when Oliver North

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was questioned about his previous lies to Congress:

"Why are you telling the truth now and not then?"

"I wasn't under oath then."...

One other observation about the Iran-contra hearings: I can't understand why Congress permits lawyers to coach witnesses. If you have ever been in a courtroom, you know a lawyer cannot walk up to the witness stand and interrupt a question or answer to whisper advice in his client's ear. The practice should be no different in congressional hearings....

"What sense does it make for the United States government to pay the medical bills of people like Armand Hammer, David Rockefeller, George Burns, and Richard Nixon?" That sensible question was recently put to readers of *The New York Times* by Harry Schwartz. There is an answer to the problem Schwartz is identifying. Remember Pay As You Go? It is my friend Barbara Torrey's idea for how to deal with the cost of medical care for the affluent aged: If the patient's relatives want the government to pay for his medical care, let the cost be taken out of his estate. It seems like a beautiful idea to me, but it has attracted so little support. There are two reasons for the lack of enthusiasm. One, argued by a few economists, is that people are motivated to work by the desire to leave an inheritance. But that is so obviously not the main motive of most people that I don't think the argument can possibly be the principal ground for the resistance to Torrey's idea. My best guess as to the real reason she is getting nowhere is that the people in the government, both on the Hill and in the executive branch, who make new policy are mostly between the ages of 30 and 50. They are the inheriting class. It's in their interest to have the government pay Uncle Money Bags's medical bills so that they can have his estate to pay for their new Jaguar and that trip to Hong Kong....

A few months ago we lauded the Packard Commission's proposal to abolish Defense Systems Acquistion Review Councils (DSARCs), Pentagon administrative bodies that supposedly existed to stop bad procurement ideas but over the years had been bureaucratically transformed, by virtue of limiting membership to those with a stake in seeing a project approved, into committees of yea-sayers that routinely sprinkled blessings on even the most outrageous misuses of defense resources. Packard recommended that DSARCs be replaced with a Joint Requirements Management Board (JRMB) on which would sit several Pentagon officials with no direct interest in the outcome of procurement decisions. To our delight, Caspar Weinberger assented to Packard's plan. This is the kind of reform that is deadly dull to all but the participants, yet may in the long run be a hundred times more important than the toilet seat scandals that get so much play.

Does this sound like the first Pentagon story of the eighties with a happy ending? Alas, one of the first actions of Weinberger's new "procurement czar," Undersecretary Richard Godwin, was to abolish the months-old JRMB and replace it with a Defense Acquisition Board (DAB).

Godwin's DAB is organized as a junior joint chiefs of staff. Its five members are Godwin, JCS vice chairman General Richard Herres, and the top procurement officers from each of the three services. This serves two purposes. First, Godwin himself becomes more important. Second, the council is returned to its desired function, namely the applying of the rubber stamp. The procurement czar's incentive within a DAB will be to insure that none of the projects over which he rules is ever canceled; the service acquisition chiefs will dedicate their efforts to the traditional goal of slicing the pie exactly three ways; only the JCS vice-chief will be in a position to question whether the weapons actually work, and he will be outvoted four-to-one.

The JRMB member Godwin was most anxious to reorganize out of the action is David Chu, director of the Pentagon's office of Program Analysis and Evaluation (PA&E). Within military circles Chu has a reputation for speaking his mind about technology that is unreliable or doesn't fit any coherent plan: he is the last person you would want at a pie-dividing party. Chu is also

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something of an enigma to institutional Washington because he is a devoted team player who disdains both congressional investigations and the press, never speaking to reporters and insisting that the entire PA&E staff do likewise.

According to *Aviation Week*, when Godwin tried to hold the first meeting of his spineless new board, several designated JRMB members, including Chu, showed up anyway. Following a bureaucratic confrontation, Godwin allowed them to stay but refused to let them sit at the same table with him. The silver lining here is that perhaps Godwin's power grab will move Chu to go public. He could become a powerful spokesman for the cause of a military that actually works....

You may remember Richard Neely, the West Virginia supreme court justice who fired his secretary because she refused to babysit for his child. The justice is back in the news. It seems he used $2,575 from his political campaign fund to pay for a trip to China for himself, his wife, and his child. Neely's spokesman explained that the trip was taken to gain publicity for the justice's campaign for reelection....

I wonder how many people share my reaction to *The New York Times*. In the past year, the front page of the Metropolitan News has become must reading. During the same period the Washington page has become dull and lifeless and I no longer look at it regularly....

AIDS has produced a bizarre change in the sexual attitudes of liberals and conservatives. It used to be that conservatives were strict about sexual morality while liberals tended to be, if not in favor of free love, a good deal more tolerant of expressions of physical affection. Now the conservatives, in their desire to bash the homosexuals by proving AIDS is a gay disease, seem to be arguing that non-drug-using heterosexuals have nothing to fear from sex, with the implication often being that it's okay to have fun as long as it's between male and female. Liberals who don't want the gays bashed emphasize that AIDS is a threat to everyone and that you'd better think twice about any kind of fooling around....

My old friend Jim Dent of the *Charleston Gazette* has reflected on two lines the bankers love to peddle and asks this question: "If 18 percent interest on credit card accounts is 'reasonable,' how come 5¼ percent interest on deposits is 'generous'? "...

A long-standing White House practice, regardless of which party is in power, is to use employees of other agencies to work in the White House to keep down the number of people it officially employs. Congress became concerned enough about this dodge to require that the White House report the number of such employees who worked there more than 180 days a year while officially employed by another agency or department. The results suggest somewhat different standards of honor in the Carter and Reagan administrations. In 1980, three such employees were not reported to Congress. The figure for 1985 was 33....

A very important Supreme Court decision in May upheld the pretrial detention provision of the Bail Reform Act of 1984. This will upset the conventional liberals, but it is just good common sense to permit the safety of the community to be considered in determining whether a suspect should get bail. Incredibly enough, even in the case of the most dangerous criminal, this was not previously the rule in federal courts....

Could you believe that picture of smiling congressional Democrats holding Weinberger's hand aloft from the last day of the Iran-contra hearings? They were so pathetically grateful to Weinberger and George Schultz for making the case against Poindexter and North that they embraced two men they should be criticizing.

Weinberger, the father of the 600-ship, three mine-sweeper Navy, and Schultz, the architect of the policy that led to those 200 Marine deaths in Lebanon, both supported the unilateral American commitment to escort the Kuwaiti tankers, which is as dangerously stupid as anything Poindexter or North were guilty of.

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While the Russians have built 125 mine-sweepers, Weinberger has squandered money on weapons that don't work and that we don't need. And, as the man responsible for both the Defense Intelligence Agency and Naval Intelligence, he has presided over the loss of critically important submarine secrets to the Russians. The result is that in this crucial area, America has lost its lead on Cap Weinberger's watch....

The Technical Corrections Act of 1987, which is now wending its way through Congress, may have escaped your attention, but you can bet your boots that the big-time lobbyists know about it. It is their chosen instrument for undoing the damage to their clients perpetrated by the Tax Reform Bill of 1986. It is therefore important that the daily papers like *The Washington Post* and *The Wall Street Journal*, which did such good reporting on the 1986 bill, not fall asleep on this one....

A small victory was won last month in the struggle against mindless credentialism. This question was dropped from the District of Columbia's examination for taxi drivers:

"All but one of the following words describes a person who displays a low dominance: 1) a follower; 2) agreeable; 3) competitive; 4) persuasive."

Someone finally realized that knowing about low dominance has nothing to do with knowing that it takes a left turn from Key Bridge to get to Canal Road. So how did the question get into the test in the first place? And how many others like it are keeping good people from getting jobs in the many fields where such tests are used?...

Moscow was the Marines's equivalent of Butte, Montana, to which, you will recall, J. Edgar Hoover would assign FBI agents who had fallen out of favor. Some friends of ours who are in the Foreign Service say they had heard this for years and personally saw it happen when a Marine who had misbehaved at a post where they were serving was sent to Moscow as punishment....

For years, we've complained about the insanity of having hospitals staffed at night exclusively by bleary-eyed interns and residents who work 36-hour shifts. So I was pleased to hear that New York was planning to reform this system. Then I learned what the "reform" was. The shift will be reduced to 16 hours—12 in the emergency room. That's still going to leave them bleary-eyed toward the end. Remember *The Washington Monthly*'s simple answer to this problem: require all doctors to work a few nights a year as a condition to having hospital privileges. There are enough of them to mean that if this were done interns and residents could lead sane lives and the rest of us would be spared the consequences of their fatigue.

This would finally put an end to the terrible cycle of self-pity that begins with older doctors exploiting younger doctors who then feel they have the right to exploit the next generation. This self-pity also contributes mightily to their conviction that they have the right to charge the rest of us whatever they can get away with....

What kind of clothes are the Yuppies buying their children? Little girls are wearing David Charles dresses priced at $225 to $500; boys, suit jackets and pleat-front trousers by Bagatchi-Bambini for $300. When I attended the public schools of Charleston, West Virginia in the thirties and forties, we wore clothes that everyone could afford. The result was that no one had to feel ashamed or inferior....

Integrating schools does not, researchers have found, automatically decrease racial prejudice. What does seem to reduce bigotry is interracial sports teams, bands, and clubs where groups are small enough for members to get to know one another and to see one another contribute to the group's performance. "Teams get students to care about each other's achievement," says Robert Slavin, a psychologist at Johns Hopkins. "Improved race relations are a byproduct. When you ask the students to list their best friends before a and after the teams, you almost always find the students have made friends outside their own racial groups."

This sounds thoroughly sensible to me. I hope teachers and principals will take note....

—*Charles Peters*

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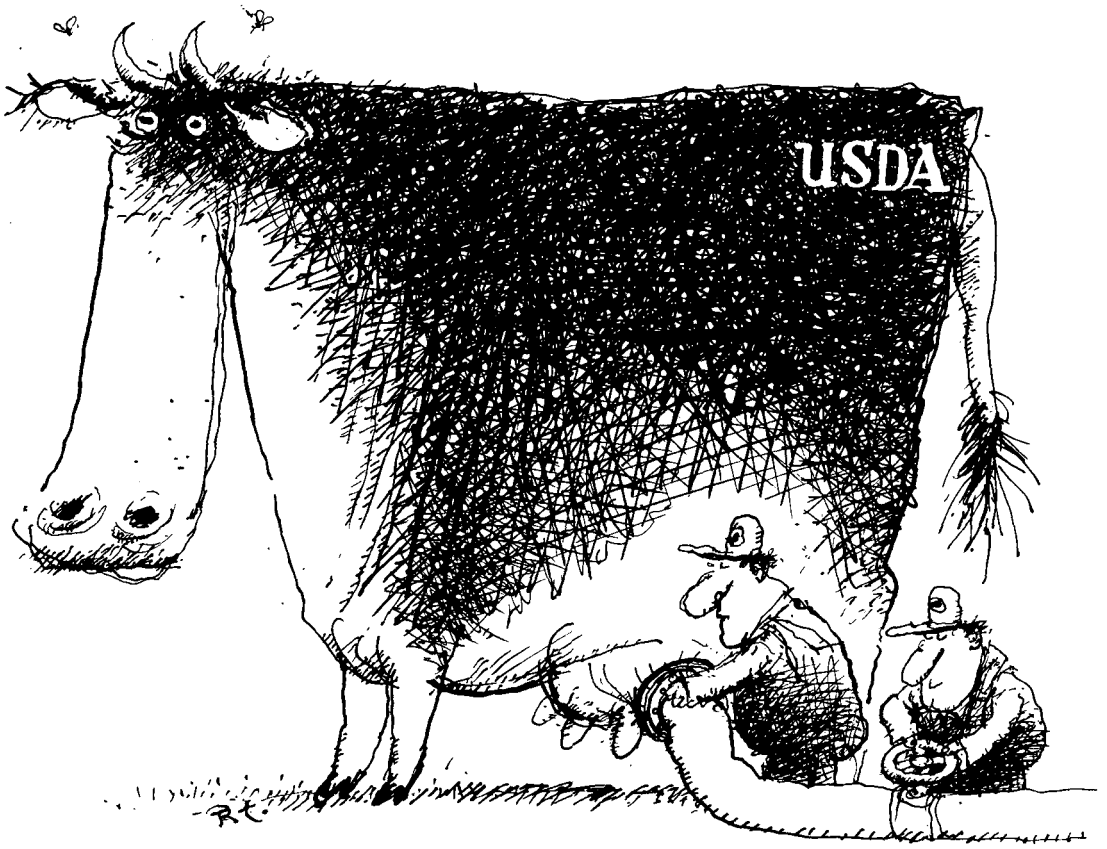

Drawing by Richard Thompson

GREEN THUMBS:

THE PIK AND ROLL AND OTHER SCAMS FROM THE FARM BELT

The ingenious ways farmers milk government subsidy programs

by Jeffrey L. Pasley

The Future Farmers of America wants its young members to have the rich experience of tilling the soil. So in its classrooms across rural America, 416,000 high-school-aged students learn the right time to sow, the best ways to reap, and the skill that every modern farmer needs—how to harvest cash from the federal till.

Today's FFA concentrates on the business side of agriculture, according to spokesman Jeri Mattics. In Princeton, California, the local FFA chapter enrolled their 60-acre rice field in the federal price support program—and received $7,087 from the U.S. Department of Agriculture,

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according to the National Taxpayers' Union. Princeton High's FFA advisor, Andy Ferrendelli, called it "a learning experience," noting that "they go out and get loans just like other farmers around here."

Students who learn to plow the markets and federal programs can win blue ribbons. Last year, FFA's fiber crop winner was Allen Lewis, a student cotton farmer from Tennessee. Lewis, a high-school senior, used all available government programs and reported profits of a little over $15,000 for his year-long project. In his own down-home way he told the judges, "The key is determining my break-even point...I analyze the market situation and act accordingly."

The kids are learning just how rich the soil can be. Everyone knows about the growth of farm subsidies—which cost the federal treasury $26 billion last year and now account for nearly one-third of farmers' income. Less well-known are the financial gymnastics farmers go through to cash in. Unlike city-dwellers who need a helping hand, farmers do not receive their government aid in a tidy monthly check. The Agriculture Department has a labyrinth of programs to raise prices, cut acreage, and promote exports. It's a nutty system, which lets the wealthiest farmers reap huge benefits while the poor are not helped enough. It is also turning farming into a perverse game in which the farmer who survives is not necessarily the most productive, but the one most adept at exploiting loopholes in subsidy programs. Farmers who once spent their time figuring out how to get rid of grub worms and boll weevils now rise early to tap their PCs, calculating how to get the most from the federal government. "To put it very bluntly," an Iowa farmer told the *Des Moines Register*, "if you're not farming the government today, you're not doing a very good job."

Here are five ways farmers improve their government yields:

The Combo Platter

To play the farm subsidy game, you have to know the rules. They vary a bit depending on your crop, but for all of them, from sorghum to soybeans, from cotton to corn, there's just one object: manipulating the price.

Uncle Sam does that for you. In consultation with lobbyists and the USDA, the House and Senate agriculture committees set a "target price." This is what all the interests agree farmers *ought* to get for their crops. Congress also sets a lower price, called the "loan rate." This is supposed to approximate what farmers would get for crops under normal, if regrettable, market conditions. In fact, true market prices are usually, but not always, much lower than the loan rate.

Though created out of thin air in Washington, these two prices are as real to farmers as high and low tide are to fishermen. Farmers receive a "deficiency payment"—please don't call it a subsidy—that is the difference between these government-invented prices. In June, the deficiency payment per bushel of corn was 75 cents, so the average large family farm, which produces 214,852 bushels of corn a year, was eligible for a $161,000 deficiency payment.

That's just for starters. Only a lazy farmer sits on his porch, counting his deficiency payments. The enterprising yeoman keeps the subsidy but also gets himself a loan from the government-owned Commodity Credit Corporation. The idea behind these loans is to give farmers enough money to keep them afloat until prices rise. That same farm was eligible for a $490,000 loan. The catch is, this loan rate happens to be 40 percent higher than the local market rate for corn. (The annual loan rate for all crops has been running 50 percent higher.)

With loan in hand, the farmer can either pay it back in cash or simply forfeit the collateral (the grain) to the CCC and keep the loan. If he holds onto the grain, he must pay for the storage and the principal and interest. Not an appetizing thought.

So Farmer Brown orders up The Combo Platter: he turns the crop over to the government, keeps that loan money *and* collects the original deficiency payment. Farmer Brown, therefore, is eligible for $651,000 for a crop that would have brought him about half that much on the market. Smiling, he's not alone and he's done nothing illegal. Over the past three years, half the farmers who took out CCC loans gave their grain to Uncle Sam—and kept the money.

The Prince of Liechtenstein Means Test

Anyone can farm government loans, even if they're rich. That's not cheating; that's the way the program is supposed to work.

Federal agriculture loans are linked to the size of a farmer's crop, not to whether the farmer needs the money. There's no fussing with messy means tests. The bigger the crop, the bigger the loan. "There is no denying that some large, pro-

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fitable farms receive large government payments and loans, but that is to be expected. Program benefits, such as deficiency payments, are determined by the number of bushels or other units produced," explains USDA official Jim Johnson. It doesn't matter if you're Ernest & Julio Gallo or Ma Joad.

No wonder in 1985 64 percent of farm subsidies went to the largest 21 percent of farms.

The rich are equally entitled to special marketing loans. This kind of borrowing is not only profitable, but downright patriotic. These marketing loans were meant to help our nation's rice and cotton farmers (the only crops eligible) stand tall against foreign competition. Under the program, they can peddle their long grain or puffy instant rice overseas at absurdly low prices. The Feds make up the difference between what they get on the Manila market and what they would have gotten in Memphis.

Farmer Brown can take out a "loan" from the government at the loan rate ($6.84 per hundredweight of rice), and then pay it back at that low foreign price ($3.50 per hundredweight). He's only paying back half of what the government lent him. Nothing is stopping him from collecting a deficiency payment either.

Congress recognized that this program was more than a bit hypocritical. It was a textbook case of dumping on foreign markets, precisely the kind of practice that makes us so annoyed at the Japanese. So rather than ignite a trade war, Congress bit the bullet on marketing loans: it expanded them to include rice and cotton sold in *this country*. A program once meant to show the flag now subsidizes the rice an Arkansas farmer sells in Vermont.

All this has been like rain after a drought to the nation's rice and cotton agribusinessmen. For instance, the J.G. Boswell, Co. in California's San Joaquin Valley picked up a quick $20 million last year. But it's not just Americans who have benefitted from this flag-waving program. Because the programs sudsidize the price of all rice and cotton grown in the United States, any foreigner who grows here gets federal aid. Last year, the Crown Prince of Liechtenstein collected $2.2 million in subsidies for his interest in a Texas rice farm larger than his native country.

Congress has long been conscious of the bad press caused when the very rich receive subsidies. In the early seventies Congress imposed a cap—currently $250,000—on the amount any one person can get back from the government after he sells his crop. But the caps don't make the crown prince sweat at the baccarat table. Marketing loans start out as regular CCC loans, on which there are no limits. If the prince and his Texas associates feel cramped by the cap, they can just forfeit their crop and pocket the multi-million "marketing" loan.

People Who Need People

Next time you're driving along a rural highway and see a leather-skinned man, riding a tractor, wiping his brow, and plowing his field, don't assume he's a farmer. He may be a farmer-entity.

When Congress imposed per-person payment limits, it left the secretary of agriculture to define just what "person" would mean. Subsequent USDA regulations conferred personhood on any legal entity, including individuals, joint ventures, limited partnerships, corporations, associations, trusts, or estates. Though legally corporations have some of the same rights as people, most federal laws manage to make necessary distinctions between the two. We don't, for instance, tax people and corporations at the same rate or under the same rules. Not making that distinction in agriculture left a hole as big as all outdoors, one particularly useful to large cotton farmers—with powerful friends in Congress—who felt squeezed by the limit. When USDA tried to patch the hole with new regulations a few years later, Congress ripped it open again, mandating that USDA stick to the old definition.

Like Sybil, today's farmer can establish as many legal identities as he wants and have each one receive money up to the limit. If a farmer and his sister run a farm together as a corporation they can each collect up to $250,000 in individual payments, plus another $250,000 for their corporation.

It is perfectly legal to have dozens of corporations living under one roof. General Accounting Office investigators found a 5,841 acre farm (they won't say where) operated by a father, his four sons, and one daughter. They qualified for $595,000 worth of payments even before he decided to have some corporate offspring. Afterwards, his new farm family included the same six people plus 15 brand-new corporations formed through various combinations of the family members. The grand total: 21 "people" qualifying for government assistance. In 1986, the family collected a $1.05 million deficiency payment. Farmers used to need large families so that there

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would be hands to do the chores. Now each new bundle of joy means a small corporate empire.

This farm-multiplication scheme makes agriculture an attractive investment. According to the GAO, one farm management company broke up a 6,660 acre farm into 28 separate tracts, and rented them to investors, each of whom could receive subsidies. The farm's total federal take became $1.4 million: it would have been only $50,000 if owned by a single company. In 1985, there were $20 million in payments to foreign-owned farms.

Just as New York breeds literary trends, the South hatches federal farm subsidy scams. Back in the seventies, the people who had the most to gain from people-multiplying were those with the biggest subsidies to protect: southern rice and cotton farmers, with their relatively large land holdings and perennially low commodity prices. The most complicated of these multiplying schemes was dubbed the "Mississippi Christmas Tree." As corn, wheat, and other grain prices fell in the eighties, the Mississippi Christmas Tree moved north and west, with devastating results on the federal treasury. Between 1984 and 1986, almost 9,000 new "people" were reorganized onto the USDA payment rolls. The number of persons receiving deficiency payments at or near the limit climbed from 4,300 in 1983 to 29,000 two years later. This, of course, created a booming new business for rural barristers; the technique's spread, one USDA official told the *National Journal*, is a "welfare program for lawyers." By 1989, GAO estimates that all the paper-shuffling could cost the government $2.3 billion.

Quid Pro Dough

Farmers and agribusiness executives argue that huge payments are misleading because farmers face a serious quid pro quo for joining one subsidy program. They point to the USDA requirement that participating farmers leave a certain percentage of their land fallow. The "set-aside" requirement ranges from 35 percent for rice farmers to 20 percent for corn. Ostensibly, the farmer trades much of his productive capacity—and profit—for a generous government check.

But any farmer with a truly green thumb can beat the set-aside. You may have heard that some farmers commonly qualify for government aid by counting as "set-aside" land they can't use anyway, such as acres with rocky or sandy soil, land that tends to flood, or fields that are left fallow because of normal conservation practices. In an interview with the *Des Moines Register*, former Rep. Cooper Evans dubbed this "an almost universal practice, one that I, too, have felt compelled to follow with my own farmland. The wettest part of my whole property is all set aside."

Using still another dodge, farmers qualify for subsidy programs by setting aside land not to lie fallow but to produce forage for their livestock. So Farmer Brown could fulfill his set-aside requirement for the corn subsidy program by planting hay on 20 percent of his land. Or, under a separate farm subsidy program called the "50-92" plan, a farmer can collect deficiency payments on 92 percent of his land for agreeing to set aside—and, if he wishes, grow forage on—50 percent of it.

Then there are cases of outright fraud. In California, a farmer got more than $4 million in subsidies for "idling" 14,000 acres that were submerged under nine feet of water. In Iowa, two different farmers counted the same 103-acre piece of land in their set asides.

Finally, some farmers use special seed, extra fertilizers, pesticides, herbicides, and machinery to increase the amount of crop they can produce per acre. Although this technique seems less devious, it achieves the same end as the others: it allows farmers to qualify for billions from federal programs intended to reduce production while at the same time enabling them to increase production. That, in turn, lowers prices further, necessitating more government spending and more set asides.

PiK and Roll

It seemed like a great idea. The government's Commodity Credit Corporation was loaded with surplus grain from loan forfeitures; the farmers had billions in subsidies coming. Aha! said the Reagan administration in 1983: instead of cash, we'll make farmers take some of their subsidies in grain, which they can then go out and sell or keep. (It's called the "Payment in Kind" program, or PiK for short.) That proved a logistical nightmare. So rather than the grain itself, last year farmers started getting "PiK certificates" good for a set amount of grain. Farmers could sell or trade these certificates like coupons or securities. So far, so good.

The government's mistake was letting farmers use PiK certificates to pay back their government loans. Now there's a thriving market of farmers who spend their days trading PiK certificates at the government's expense.

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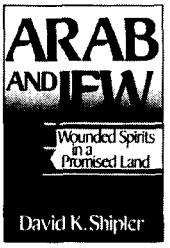

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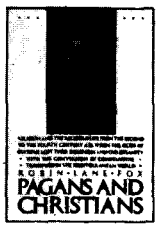

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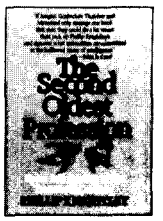

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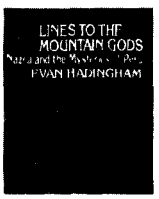

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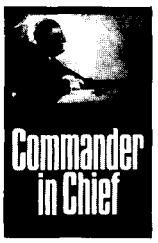

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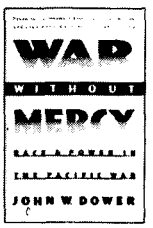

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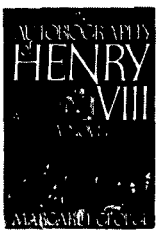

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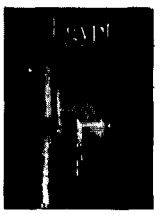

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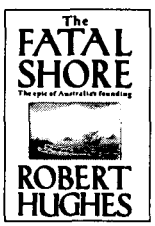

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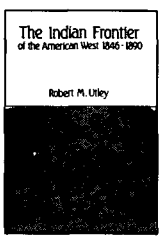

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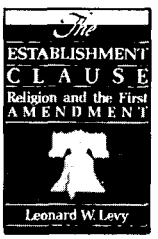

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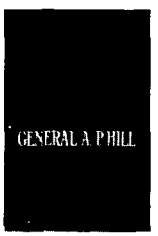

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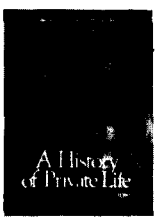

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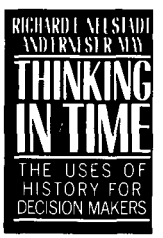

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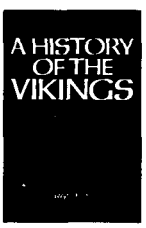

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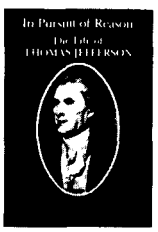

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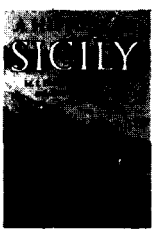

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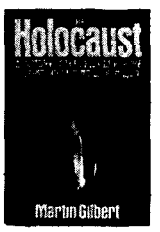

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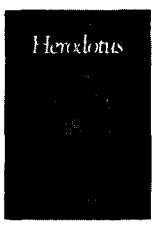

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The simplest PiK scheme, the PiK and Roll (named for a basketball play) works like this. The government gives Farmer Brown part of his deficiency payment—say, $2,200—in PiK certificates. He can sell his certificates or trade them in at a nearby CCC warehouse for $2,200 worth of grain at the local market price—1,000 bushels if the price is $2.20 a bushel. But Farmer Brown has taken out a $3,500 loan with the CCC by putting up 1,000 bushels of his own grain as collateral at a loan rate of $3.50. Normally he'll have to pay that $3,500 back (with interest) or forfeit his grain. Under the PiK program, he can settle his loan with his PiK certificates on a bushel for bushel, rather than a dollar for dollar basis. In other words, he's turned $2,200 in PiK certificates into $3,500 in debt relief—courtesy of Uncle Sam. (It's like buying shoes at K-Mart and exchanging them for cash at Gucci.) Plus, he still has the 1,000 bushels of grain to sell on the market or to feed his livestock.

But that's nickel and dime stuff. The real money is in the mushrooming PiK certificate marketplace. For a variety of reasons—all farmers don't take out CCC loans, and loan rates for grain aren't always higher than local market prices—many farmers don't PiK and roll their certificates. Instead, they sell them, at a handsome premium, to farmers who don't have enough certificates to retire their loans. PiK certificates are tied to local grain prices, and grain prices vary from place-to-place; so there's profit in buying certificates where they're less valuable and selling them where they're more valuable. Naturally, clever farmers have started moonlighting as PiK brokers. Jon Drozd, an Allegan, Michigan farmer recently profiled in *Farm Futures*, says he and a partner have earned $2,000 for a half-day's work brokering PiKs and selling financial advice to farmers who haven't figured out the PiK racket. "Business has been crazy lately," he told the magazine. The overhead is minimal: just a phone, a calculator, a pick-up to visit farmers, and a revolving line of credit from a local bank. Says Drozd's banker: "Now and then we remind Jon to keep his mind on the home farm."

Farm Futures also featured an example that would make Ivan Boesky reach for a hoe. "How to Make $31,937 in an Afternoon" described a Michigan farmer going about his pecuniary chores. He drove to the local USDA office, took out a CCC loan of $132,480, and then paid it back minutes later with $92,880 worth of PiK certificates. Subtracting the $7,663 premium he paid for the funny money, the farmer cleared a profit of $31,937 for a few hours of paper work, all on the government's tab. Better yet, he still had the grain. *Farm Futures* referred to this as part of a farmer's "marketing strategy."

Ailing farmers do benefit from PiK and Roll. But it's a crazy way to help the poor. The government has no control over how much money leaves its coffers by this route, let alone who gets it. PiK and Roll encourages farmers to take out CCC loans as an investment device rather than as a stop-gap to get through hard times. Like most numbers rackets, PiK and Roll benefits wealthy farmers most because they can afford to buy extra PiK certificates in bulk.

Welfare Reform

The farm program is a piece of Swiss cheese for a relatively simple reason—neither farmers nor their representatives can bring themselves to call farm supports welfare. So the government pays the subsidy indirectly by using the system of target prices and loans to manipulate the prices farmers get for their crops. Sometimes this broadbrush approach helps struggling farmers, but that's purely incidental. There is no means test on price supports.

The solution is just as simple, a plan called "decoupling," which is being pushed by Senators David Boren of Oklahoma and Rudy Boschwitz of Minnesota. The plan would "decouple" government farm support programs from the market. "The goal of decoupling is to make the farmer's planting decision entirely neutral from the government program," says a pamphlet from Boschwitz's office. Farmers would plant according to what the market would bear. If that doesn't bring in enough money to feed the family and pay for costs, the government would do what it does for others in need—send a check. Because their payments would be tied to past production, there's no incentive to fabricate new farms, spawn new corporations, or buy grain in other states to make more money.

A system of direct income support would make government dependency less easy for farmers to swallow. They could no longer kid themselves that the farm program merely provided them with a "fair price." Many farm groups oppose the plan on the grounds that it would turn the farm program into welfare, to which Boschwitz replies: "Farmers are getting benefits now and they would get benefits under my plan. What's the difference? If they call my plan 'welfare,' what do they call the current programs?" ■

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HOT CHAIN NIXES WINGO, BUSCAPADES —NABS PULITZERS, BIG BUCKS

Knight-Ridder shows that newspaper chains can be profitable—and good

by Matthew Cooper

When Walter Annenberg was publisher and owner of *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, there was a lot of news he didn't see fit to print. For a time, the city's pro basketball team, the 76ers, made his enemies list—and barely made the paper, given just one paragraph when they lost and two when they won. Why? "Sometimes people would be on the list and you would have no idea why," recalls Frank Dougherty, a veteran of the *Philadelphia Daily News*, Annenberg's tabloid.

Then there was the Shapp Gap. Annenberg, according to a biographer, regularly called Milton Shapp a "sleazy son of a bitch" and made it clear to his reporters that if they had to write stories on Shapp, they had better not be flattering. Philadelphians might not have noticed, except it was 1966 and Shapp, besides being a noted philanthropist, was a leading, and ultimately successful, candidate for governor of Pennsylvania. What did appear in the papers usually had to do with crime. On staff, the paper had court reporters, police reporters, and a criminal. The *Inquirer*'s top investigative reporter was convicted for extortion after he had accepted kickbacks for suppressing stories.

Those halcyon days ended in 1969 when Annenberg sold both papers to Knight Newspapers, now Knight-Ridder, for $55 million. With the competing *Philadelphia Bulletin* holding a grip on the city's readers and advertisers, rivals chortled that Knight had been suckered. John Purcell, then-Gannett's vice-president for finance, told *Business Week* that Knight would have been better off crossing the river to Jersey. "Look at our Camden paper," he said. "It serves Cherry Hill, and look at the statistics. The two Philadelphia papers have steadily declined and we have steadily increased."

With the *Inquirer* and *News* bleeding red ink, Knight executives did what they had done in other cities. They spent more money. The new editor, Jim McMullen, replaced Annenberg flunkies and enlarged the staff with 80 new reporters. His successor, Eugene Roberts, got Knight to finance five new foreign bureaus, a 20 percent larger news hole, several wire services, and more than a dozen comic strips, including Doonesbury. "We wanted to become dependable and solid and readable and engaging," says Roberts.

Philadelphians seemed to like it. By July 1980, the *Inquirer* had closed a 173,000 circulation gap to overtake the *Bulletin*, forcing it to fold two years later. Rather than stop there, Knight-Ridder increased the news budget another $5 million. It's been money well spent. Philadelphia accounted for almost half of Knight-Ridder's newspaper division's growth last year. The *Inquirer* has hauled in 13 Pulitzers since Annenberg left and the *Daily News* is a scrappy, honest tabloid with ten of its own local columnists and a great sports section. They even cover the 76ers.

Knight-Ridder's Philadelphia story is dramatic, but hardly unique to the chain. The $1.9 billion company has whipped several mediocre papers into shape. With 44 Pulitzers, five this year, Knight-Ridder and its 34 dailies boast more than any newspaper chain, save *The New York Times*. Most have gone to its big name papers like the *Inquirer*, *Miami Herald*, *Detroit Free Press* and *San Jose Mercury News*, but its less sexy papers in Akron, Ohio and Lexington, Kentucky have won, too. Earlier this year, *Adweek*'s jury of notables ranked three Knight-Ridder papers (Philadelphia, San Jose and Miami) among the nation's ten best, more than any other chain. But Knight-Ridder papers aren't good just because of their reporting. They have color, comics, and plenty of life.

These are triumphs worth noting because, like it or not, more and more papers are owned by chains—almost three quarters of the nation's 1,676 daily newspapers, up from 50 percent in 1960.

Matthew Cooper is an editor of The Washington Monthly.

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The demise of the independently owned, civic-minded paper is cause for concern and no small whiff of nostalgia. But Knight-Ridder shows that all newspaper chains don't have to be cheesy Murdoch or fluffy Gannett. If they're careful to restrain their worst corporate impulses, as Knight-Ridder *usually* is, chains can be both profitable and good.

Four-color schlock

What happens when a newspaper chain comes to town? Historically, the owner placed his ego on public display. William Randolph Hearst, Joseph Pulitzer, and E.W. Scripps published manifestos for their own political agendas, with little concern for careful, analytic reporting. While yellow journalism has often been replaced by full color, there are still a few cities where the lurid chain lives. Most notably, there's Rupert Murdoch's News Corporation, stretching from Boston to San Antonio. Everyone has their favorite *New York Post* headline. Mine ran when Yuri Andropov succeeded Leonid Brezhnev: "Sinister KGB Biggie Gets Brez Job."

Other chains have adhered to the tradition of putting the owner's imprimatur on the paper. Freedom Newspapers, a booming libertarian-leaning outfit out of Irvine, California, with 29 papers and circulation approaching one million, peddles brochures with its editorial philosophy: "[In] free enterprise the gain or profit of one is the gain of all." And, of course, Gannett has infused the up-tempo tone of owner Al Neuharth throughout all of its 93 dailies, not just *USA Today*. Glance at the front-page story about the horse who chugs beer in the July 11 *Idaho Statesman* and you know it's Gannett.

But most chains poison papers not by pushing an ideology but by running them as little more than free weekly shopping supplements. Mencken said chain papers were designed to "please everyone, and especially everyone with something to sell." He might have been describing the $1 billion empire of Donald W. Reynolds, owner, founder, and CEO of Donrey Media with 57 small dailies not exactly known for their pit-bull reporting. "At some small papers, if you leave the lights on all night, you're in the red," he told *Forbes*.

Such cut-and-paste journalism is alien to those weaned on *The New York Times, The Washington Post* or the *Los Angeles Times*. But for millions of Americans outside the reach of urban dailies, the lousy chain paper is all they can get, not just for the minutes of the Rotary Club meeting but for national and international news, too. Take Canadian-owned Thomson Newspapers, king of the 10,000-circulation daily. With more papers than any other chain, it is the daily bread in 104 towns, from Altoona, Pennsylvania to Zanesville, Ohio.

You'd be surprised how much money you can make off Zanesvillians. It's estimated that Thomson scores profit margins of approximately 30 to 40 percent—roughly twice the industry average. After all the cash is squeezed out, the papers are left with skeleton staffs and heaps of copy off the Associated Press wire. Bruce VanDusen edited the Kokomo (Indiana) *Tribune* until he resigned in frustration 13 months after it was purchased by Thomson. He found Thomson HQ demanding more and more copy from his overworked staff. "Our staff efficiency ratio was 2.0 stories and 0.42 photos per staffer day," he wrote in *Quill*. "Similar Thomson papers averaged 7.7 and 1.2 photos. We had to improve."

Clearly lousy newspapers—like awful restaurants—can avoid being slapped by the invisible hand of the marketplace. While bad restaurants survive because the peckish and the harried need them, most papers have a captive audience and can easily get away with cutting back on quality (fewer than 2 percent of U.S. towns have two competative papers). But for every overpriced fern bar there's a great cheap restaurant that turns a healthy profit, too. In the newspaper world there is Knight-Ridder. The executives at Knight-Ridder's corporate headquarters in Miami are very much concerned with the bottom line and pleasing the stockholders, but their strategy is starkly different from many chains: making long-term editorial investments with the hope that readers will gravitate towards quality. "We are totally convinced that good newspapers are profitable newspapers; that undergirds the culture that we inherited," says James K. Batten, Knight-Ridder's president.

The formula has worked well since the thirties, when John S. Knight began the chain by taking over his father's sole paper, the *Akron Beacon Journal*, and then moving south to buy the *Miami Herald* and smaller papers in Georgia. Knight reformed and strengthened his new properties. During World War II, when newsprint rations forced publishers to cut ads or cut news, Knight kept the *Miami Herald* filled with the latest bulletins from overseas and cut ads. The rival *Miami Tribune* chose to cut news and eventually watched its readership slip away. The same commitment to news transformed the *Charlotte*

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Before Knight bought the *Charlotte Observer*, the ad manager regularly assigned stories—dispatching reporters to cover sales and store openings.

Observer from a sleepy sheet into one of the best newspapers of its size. Before Knight bought the paper in 1954, the ad manager regularly assigned stories—dispatching reporters to cover store openings and sales. Under Knight-Ridder, it's booming.

The Ridders, on the other hand, published lower-grade papers. They had worked their way east to west, beginning with a German language daily in New York in 1892 and then purchasing the *Journal of Commerce,* the *St. Paul Pioneer Dispatch* and the *San Jose Mercury News* over the next 84 years. But, significantly, the merger that brought the two chains together in 1974, was more like an acquisition. Knight heirs controlled the new board.

Within a decade the new company had transformed not just the *Philadelphia Inquirer* but several other dreary papers. The *San Jose Mercury News*, skimpy before the merger, is now one of the nation's best. "The Ridders could have been selling shoes. They were much more interested in the bottom line than the Knights," said one reporter with the *Mercury News*, before and after it was consolidated into the Knight-Ridder chain. Over the years, Ridder did little to beef up the *Mercury News.* Chains rarely do. When Newhouse's *Cleveland Plain Dealer* became the only paper in town in 1982, the response wasn't to invigorate the city desk or open a foreign bureau, but to jack up ad rates by one-third.

In contrast, when Knight-Ridder formed, it began pouring money into the *Mercury News*—doubling the number of reporters, adding foreign bureaus and 20 sections. The soaring semiconductor industry helped boost San Jose's fortunes, but it's hard to imagine Donrey, Thomson, or Gannett re-investing that money in reporting.

These improvements make the *Mercury News* a much better read than the *San Francisco Chronicle* 75 miles away. Even though the *Chronicle*'s 506,000 circulation is almost twice as large as that of the *Mercury News*, it is a far less substantial paper. Take the April 9th issues. The two papers run wire stories on the Moscow sex-and-spy scandal and both cover a local plane crash. But any similarity ends there. The *Mercury News* carries two original, enterprising series by staff reporters. From the South China Sea, there's the first of a three-part series on how Thai pirates slaughter Vietnamese boat refugees while the international community looks the other way. (San Jose has a big Vietnamese community and the story is one of several that month on Asian topics.) The other shows how the West, booming a few years ago, is now getting pummeled by the trade deficit.

The same day, the *Chronicle* is flat. There's a tired piece by the paper's political editor about the campaign to fill Sala Burton's congressional seat. The article is buried at the bottom of the page next to a late-breaking two-paragraph Reuters item about mischievous Soviet youths tipping gravestones. The *Chronicle*'s important investigative story uncovers Haight-Ashbury and "The Twentieth Anniversary of the Summer of Love." The lead is especially gripping: "It was 1967 in San Francisco and love flowed as freely as the psychedelic drugs." You know the rest. The *Chronicle*'s must-read editorial page features intellectual heavy-weights like Dear Abby.

And while the *Mercury News* is more serious than the *Chronicle*, it is also more fun. It has plenty of what most people read newspapers for—crosswords, color, leisure sections, a Sunday magazine—even more comics than the *Chronicle*. With sharp graphics and color that doesn't render everyone Martian-toned, San Jose is a striking paper, in part because Knight-Ridder's very profitable Graphics Network is supplied free to its papers. In contrast, the *Chronicle* is a gray, Sominex-laced paper that's difficult to follow. Tiny stories, like those nutty Soviet kids, pop out everywhere, and big chunks of white space bet-

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ween stories make it difficult to tell where you are. The business section is all green, but its hue is more pea-soup than legal tender.

The Partridge Family

Of course, Knight-Ridder isn't the only chain that puts out good papers. Times-Mirror boasts its flagship *Los Angeles Times*, the *Baltimore Sun* and *Newsday* on Long Island. The Tribune Company owns the *New York Daily News*, *Chicago Tribune* and the *Orlando Sentinel*. But those companies operate just a few papers apiece in mostly urban markets. Knight-Ridder also brings good journalism to towns and smaller cities.

In Ohio, Knight-Ridder's *Akron Beacon Journal* makes Gannett's *Cincinnati Enquirer* look lightweight. On June 1, both covered President Reagan's first big speech on AIDS. But the *Beacon Journal* went further with a piece on how Akron is coping with the epidemic. The issue is dominated by three stories on the local housing shortage; the *Enquirer*'s biggest story is about a couple that makes their own shoes.

In South Dakota, Knight-Ridder's *Aberdeen American News* has everything a small rural paper should: a good mix of local, state and foreign stories and the latest commodity prices presented clearly and attractively on the front page. In June, they published strong pieces on literacy in South Dakota and corruption in a local foster grandparents program. By contrast, the *Huron Daily Plainsman*, run by Freedom Newspapers, is thin, almost all AP copy, and full of probing articles such as the gripping saga of a traveling family band, like the Partridge Family, where the kids are blind.

While Knight-Ridder puts its reporters on big assignments, it also knows when *not* to. On one hand it avoids the syndrome of relying almost entirely on the AP and UPI wires. But unlike other chains it doesn't go on prestige trips and send a reporter to every event. Two reporters covered the Iran-contra hearings for the Knight-Ridder chain. But virtually every Times-Mirror paper sent a reporter to sit in the committee room and take copious notes. Is there really a compelling reason, besides a thirst for prestige, for each paper to send a reporter to the hearings? Couldn't they have used a wire story about the testimony and then dispatched a bureau reporter to a story not swamped by journalists? Just because Knight-Ridder uses wire services for important stories doesn't mean they miss out. When you pick up the Knight-Ridder paper in Long Beach, California, you are not just getting the best of Knight-Ridder but the best of *The New York Times*. New Yorkers aren't so lucky. The *Times* doesn't run stories from the Knight-Ridder wire.

Instead of sending the whole staff plodding around with the pack, Knight-Ridder allows its reporters to do longer, investigative pieces. At *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, special projects teams dot the newsroom and many reporters are given a remarkable tool—the freedom to take their time. "Hell, you're just getting your hands dirty after three months," said one *Inquirer* reporter. Because reporters are allowed to thoroughly study the nuances of seemingly boring institutions, the *Inquirer's* reports on securities fraud, municipal court corruption, and IRS ineptitude are not only comprehensive but engaging. Sure, there are some interminable series, dubbed "megaturds" by reporters, like the four-part saga of the African rhino. But most hit the mark. Such generosity with time is not limited to the *Inquirer*. Jeffrey Marx and Michael York of the *Lexington Herald Leader* conducted more than 200 interviews and spent months to uncover corruption in University of Kentucky athletics.

Even in foreign coverage, Knight-Ridder deploys its people wisely. It has 15 foreign bureaus and has assigned two major bureaus to each of its four largest papers. San Jose, for instance, controls the Tokyo and Mexico City bureaus. Instead of having its reporter, Lewis Simons, cover Prime Minister Nakasone's latest press release, they have him work on major enterprise stories geared towards the computer industry.

It would be one thing if Knight-Ridder's attention to news threatened to bankrupt the company. But Knight-Ridder turns a healthy profit—suggesting that other newspaper chains could emulate its model were they willing.

The investor who bought Knight-Ridder stock at the beginning of 1986 would have gotten a 20 percent return from stock appreciation and dividends by year's end, almost as high as Gannett's 22 percent. Knight-Ridder isn't the best buy, but it's very close. "There are some people interested in nothing but the bottom line, but we say to them: 'Look, we've had eleven straight years of increased earnings per year.' I think that answers them," said Lawrence Jinks, Vice-President for news and operations. It's telling that Knight-Ridder executives boast about news quality as well as profits in their meetings with stock market analysts.

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At Knight-Ridder, even seasoned reporters must take a personality exam. "I remember there was a question about whether you were the kind of person who would rather throw a party or go to a party," says one reporter.

None of this comes as a surprise to industry analysts who have known Knight-Ridder and other editorially-minded companies to be profitable. "In the long run quality will win out," said John Morton, a newspaper analyst with Lynch, Jones and Ryan, a Washington securities firm. Where Knight-Ridder invested in editorial quality, circulation has usually risen, boosting ad revenues. And the Knight-Ridder expansion has not just been geared toward raw circulation numbers. In Philadelphia, the extra suburban editions have helped maintain circulation in the affluent Main Line suburbs, providing even further inducement to advertisers.

Draw this picture

While Knight-Ridder is editorially and financially healthy, it would be wrong to leave the impression that it is committed to the news at any cost. Start-and-stop layoffs and hiring freezes are common at even the chain's most profitable papers. And the company's take-no-prisoners style of newspaper competition may be turning wimpy. In Philadelphia, reporters wonder whether major layoffs announced last fall don't presage the folding of the *Philadelphia Daily News* which, unlike the *Inquirer,* has been losing money.

Still it is hard to see Knight-Ridder becoming a slapdash chain like Newhouse or Thomson. Knight-Ridder's real ailment is the spread of B-school management techniques that affect so many corporations. Reporters I spoke with at Knight-Ridder papers consistently spoke well of their papers, but, more often than not, complained about oppressive bureaucracy. For instance, there were plenty of gripes about the company's Management by Objective system, or MBOs. Under the system, managers are given specific goals they must achieve.

In many ways, it's a sensible link between pay and performance and many of the objectives are laudable, like sprucing up graphics or interviewing more minorities for jobs. But MBOs, like other management "systems" inevitably tend to reduce subjective goals (like better local coverage) to easily identifiable, quantitative goals (more local coverage.)

"I hate the fuckers," says one editor in California. "The part I don't like about them is that they can lead to someone becoming a bureaucratic manager. As long as you hold X number of meetings on a topic or meet with 'community leaders' Y number of times you're O.K." One Knight-Ridder reporter on the East Coast recalled being taken out to lunch by a corporate officer from Miami as part of what seemed to be an official inspection tour of his bureau. "We talked through lunch about a lot of things, none of them especially pertinent to the newspaper," the reporter recalled. "At the end of the meal I asked him whether this trip, this lunch was to fill a quota for his MBO. He said yes."

The same kind of corpocracy mars the company's hiring tests. Passing these tests, says one reporter, is like "a red badge of courage." They began in the late sixties under the direction of Byron Harless, now retired from the Knight-Ridder board. Harless's views of testing were shaped during World War II when he evaluated soldiers to put together the most cooperative bomber crews. By all accounts he is very sensitive to employee frustrations. David Lawrence, publisher of the *Detroit Free Press*, recalls that in 1974 Harless spent nights in the press room talking to workmen when the paper switched to a new printing system. That kind of attention has earned Knight-Ridder a place in *The 100 Best Companies to Work for in America.*

The hiring tests do have some valuable aspects—by having, for instance, copy editors copy edit they can uncover diamonds in the rough. But the battery of exams is mostly remembered for its comprehensive psychological test, designed to measure ten skills like "thoughtfulness" and "personal relations" abilities. How exactly are these qualities measured? Knight-Ridder won't release the questions, but some have entered company lore. One

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asks employees to draw three pictures: one of a man, one of a woman, and finally, one of themselves. Wonder how Bob Woodward might do on that one.

"I remember this one question where you had to agree or disagree: 'I feel sorry for a bird with a broken wing.' I mean, it was stupid," said one reporter. "Another asked if you agreed or disagreed: 'Big business is bad for America.' You could put neutral, but I'd heard that you were supposed to avoid neutral."

"I remember there was a question about whether you were the kind of person who would rather throw a party or go to a party," recalls a reporter for *The Philadelphia Inquirer*. "But what I remember most is looking at questions that were scratched out. Maybe they were watching to see if you would look at them."

About the best thing you can say about the personality tests is that few managers take them seriously, aside from the full-time Ph.D.s who devise the exams. In fact, several reporters confessed that they didn't have to take the exams, that the editors who recruited them told them not to worry about it.

The same touchy-feely quality taints Knight-Ridder's lavish training program at its corporate headquarters in Miami. Editors and business managers can take seminars on graphic design, headline writing, expanding suburban coverage, and other worthwhile topics. But alongside "Newspaper Production Techniques" and "Advertising Sales Management" there's "Effective Human Relations" and "Interpersonal and Organizational Skills." Highlights of the latter include the "Verbal and Non-Verbal Communications Process" and "Face-to-Face Communications Techniques." The training institute's pamphlet features a cover photo of managers stacking boxes. "That's a game-playing exercise, that builds leadership," explained Ivan Jones, a staff Ph.D.

In one exercise, said a graduate of the institute, you get to play editor. "You have an in-basket and an out-basket, and a couple of hours to delegate all these decisions to your subordinates. Anyway, you get to the last memo in the box and you're told that one of your subordinates has died. You have to go through and re-delegate everything quickly."

Jojo the Weather Chimp

It is these kinds of practices that remind you that Knight-Ridder is a big corporation, and corporations, even those that turn out great papers, can never quite take the place of the nation's great publishing families. The history of American newspapers is replete with families that not only put out good papers, but did good work in their communities. Barry Bingham of the *Louisville Journal* and *Courier* helped his city slip the bonds of Jim Crow. In Charleston, West Virginia, Publisher Ned Chilton fought corruption in state government as only a native son could. And there are quirks of local ownership that are worth preserving if only for sake of diversity. Jojo the Weather Chimp was a staple of the *Charlotte Observer* before Knight-Ridder took over. He's gone now.

We can't bring back the age of the family paper. But at least Knight-Ridder shows that the dominance of chains need not mean a nation full of McPapers and weekly shopping guides. And there are signs that the other chains are learning. Not shirking competition, Times-Mirror's *New York Newsday* has hired 225 editorial employees in an effort to give the Big Apple a flashy but serious paper like the old *Herald Tribune*. If they pull it off, it will be as dramatic as Knight-Ridder's Philadelphia coup. Hearst used to be Californian for schlock; now the *San Francisco Examiner* is beefing up its reporting. When Gannett bought respected dailies in Detroit, Louisville, and Des Moines, a wake seemed appropriate. So far they haven't been gutted. (Even *USA Today* has things to recommend it, like a sports section that more than justifies the paper's high 50 cent price. Of course, Gannett still has a perverse pride in its banality; it runs an ad with the *USA Today* logo nestled between the special sauce, lettuce, cheese, and pickle of a Big Mac.)

Perhaps most reassuring, Americans seem to want more. There's a temptation to see the success of Gannett and other chains as proof that those dumb hicks can't handle the serious stuff. But the huge circulation of Knight-Ridder alone belies that notion. And two years ago, the Newspaper Readership Project, an industry group, completed an encouraging study of what Americans want in their newspapers. A 1979 report had revealed a craving for more lifestyle sections and jazzier graphics—and influenced the look of papers across the country. The most recent report found that while Americans still devour crossword puzzles, comics, features and cooking sections, they want more. More than anything else they want "news, hard news, real news whether its national or state, regional or local." Knight-Ridder, at least, is listening. ■

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TIDBITS AND OUTRAGES

HAIG-MECHAM '88

Republican Governor Evan Mecham of Arizona recently told a prayer breakfast: "I think today that a few remarks I might make, we go back to the relationship in this great nation with the people who was the foundation of America, the people that they've paid such a price that we might enjoy the blessings of enjoyment that we have, has been spoken this morning."

NEW MARKETS FOR PRESTONE

The Federal Highway Administration is expected to issue new regulations permitting waterbeds in the sleeper berths of trucks provided that they have safeguards to prevent freezing.

JEFFERSON LOVED HIS

To celebrate the bicentennial of the Constitution, Polaroid is giving schools 58,000 of its "You and the Constitution" kits—including study guides, posters, and a Constitution version of Polaroid's SUN LMS camera with "Constitution logo and seal."

"I'VE ALWAYS BEEN A GREAT SUPPORTER OF BARGAINING CHIPS."

Democratic Rep. Les Aspin recently turned down a chance to speak before a securities group, saying his schedule was too hectic. But he wrote to the group: "If you're able to provide an honorarium along with travel expenses, I'll gladly reconsider and see if some schedule can be worked out."

"I PROMISE, I'LL HAVE HER OUT OF DETENTION BEFORE THE BAR MITZVAH."

A recent ad in *Daily Variety* read: "IMMIGRATION. If your housekeeper is deported, who will clean up after the kids? Ron Burns, Immigration Attorney."

THERE'S NO FORWARDING ADDRESS, EITHER.

In California, the state bar's toll-free phone number to receive complaints is unlisted.

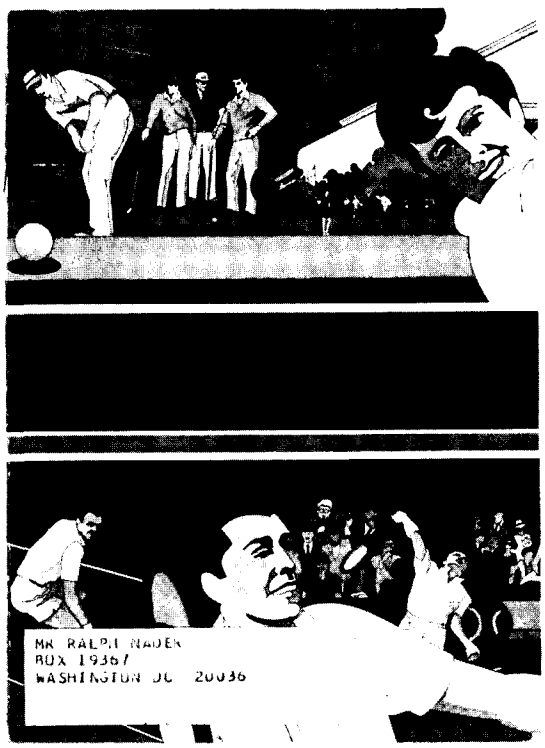
GUIDO AND I ARE GOING TO ASK A FEW SIMPLE QUESTIONS ABOUT THE SIZE OF YOUR FAMILY, YOUR ANNUAL INCOME, AND WHERE YOU KEEP YOUR PENSION FUND.

The Teamsters are trying to win the right to represent workers at the Census Bureau.

"AND IF THIS AIDS THING TURNS AROUND, YOUR TROJAN STOCKS ARE GONNA HIT ROCK BOTTOM."

In a recent issue of *Defense News*, several stock market analysts expressed concern that the prospect of an arms agreement between the United States and the Soviet Union was depressing defense industry stocks. "These stocks are going down because of the outbreak of peace," E.F. Hutton's Gary Reich said.

WELL, ER, NO WE'VE NEVER CONSIDERED INSTALLING AIR BAGS IN THE GOLF CARTS.



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AFL-CIO IS SPANISH FOR UNION BUSTING

How the U.S. and big labor fight communism by opposing popular unions and setting up unpopular ones

by Frank Smyth

It seemed the Reagan administration had finally gotten smart. Faced with increasing opposition to the centrist administration of Jose Napoleon Duarte in El Salvador, it decided that instead of peddling exploding cigars or helping right-wing death squads it would use covert action to compete for the hearts of the people. In 1986, with left-wing influence in trade unions on the rise, the Reagan administration, working with an international arm of the AFL-CIO, helped set up a parallel trade union movement that would represent workers while shunning communist influence.

One problem: the new unions haven't quite gotten the hang of appealing to the masses. For example, at Confiteria Americana, a candy factory in downtown San Salvador, management runs the new union. Private security guards armed with shotguns and high-caliber pistols stand at the entrance. "All the private employers have them," said the company's manager, a member of the new trade union. "They're necessary for security." He's half right. Most companies hire guards to keep burglars away at night, but the candy factory guards patrol only during the day. Their job is to keep the workers from striking. Workers who stay active in the old union have been told they might be fired, no small threat in a country with 40 percent unemployment. Around El Salvador the story is the same: a number of new unions have been formed to replace or compete with existing unions. They exist not to respond to worker demands, but to provide the government with a vehicle to control worker demands. Although most gains by Duarte's parallel unions have been modest, in a few key areas the parallel unions have taken over completely. And while both parties deny it, CIA and other classified documents show that both the AFL-CIO and the U.S. government have helped create and implement a policy that is anti-democratic—and backfiring.

Frank Smyth is a Washington writer. Field research for this article was funded in part by a joint grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation and the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies.

The State Department has had good reason to be concerned. A centrist politician caught between two violent extremes, Duarte has been worthy of U.S. support, but deteriorating economic conditions, government austerity measures, and continuing civil war have eaten away at his most important political base—the labor movement. And it is clear that the communist insurgents have increased their influence in the labor movement. What they have lost to Salvadoran troops in military skirmishes, leftists have apparently made up in factory organizing.

Communist infiltration? Unhappy workers? Sounds like a job for the AFL-CIO. The AFL-CIO's Latin-American branch, the American Institute for Free Labor Development (AIFLD), was formed in the wake of the Cuban Revolution to battle communism by building centrist, pro-U.S. labor movements. Since 1962, AIFLD has trained more than 500,000 Latin American unionists in democratic values. The organization gets more than 90 percent of its budget from the U.S. Agency for International Development (AID) and the U.S. Information Agency (USIA), roughly $20 million, or half the AFL-CIO domestic budget.

The organization is not without its critics. Liberal groups have charged that it helped destabilize left-wing democratic governments in the Dominican Republic and Chile and that it works too closely with the CIA. But AIFLD has often played a positive role. In El Salvador in the late sixties, it helped peasants buy land and organized community development projects. In fact, it did this so well that in 1973 the military junta kicked it out of the country.

When a reformist military junta took over the presidential palace in 1979, it invited AIFLD back to counter the left-led organized labor movement allied with revolutionary groups. While AIFLD opposed the left-leaning labor groups, it also pushed for positive change, helping write the government's agrarian reform laws and organizing a coalition of Salvadoran unionists. The Popular Democratic Union became the largest labor coalition in the country by 1982, in large

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part because it was one of the only labor coalitions allowed. It was a key base of support for Duarte and his Christian Democrats in the 1984 presidential election.

In return for the Popular Democratic Union's support, Duarte signed a "Social Pact," in which he promised to negotiate a peaceful settlement with the guerrillas, prosecute human rights violators, allow the left to participate more fully in elections, and appoint union leaders to government positions.

After the election, Duarte tried to keep some of the bargain. He made overtures to the guerrillas and appointed several unionists to government posts. But within a few months, it was apparent that Duarte was not willing, or able, to push much farther. Land reform initiatives stalled. Talks with the guerrillas collapsed as both the government and the rebels showed intransigence. By mid-1985, the Social Pact had disintegrated. In January 1986 so too did Duarte's political support. Duarte imposed a program of economic austerity that hit El Salvador's peasants and wage-earning classes hard. Bus fares, for example, rose 20 percent and prices for food staples, such as beans, tripled in one year. Although wages, most notably in the public sector, have increased, the cost of living has more than doubled since Duarte came to office. Duarte has taken the heat for these austerity measures, but a classified CIA report in September 1986 reveals that from the day he took office Duarte had resisted pressure from the Reagan administration to take these steps. The administration wanted the Salvadorans to become less dependent on foreign aid—the U.S. provides about half the country's budget, $1 million a day—and argued that the austerity measures would stabilize the economy and attract foreign investment.

The measures have had a different effect. Centrist labor groups representing 30,000 unionists, angry that Duarte had reneged on the Social Pact, joined Marxist-led unions, with about 50,000 members, to form a labor coalition called the National Union of Salvadoran Workers. Strikes and work stoppages have become more common and militant, frightening foreign investors as much as high inflation ever did. The government response to the labor unrest: if they won't join us, lick 'em.

The U.S., AIFLD, and Duarte's government all deny they helped establish the parallel trade union movement. But classified U.S. documents show that they worked together as early as November 1985 to squelch labor agitation. That month, the Salvadoran government gave AIFLD and the U.S. embassy a copy of a report recommending a crackdown and then asked AIFLD to help develop "legal means" to overcome the "paralysis" created by labor unrest in the public sector.

They were apparently aware that overt force could make matters worse. "Political violence would lend credibility to insurgent propaganda, badly weaken Duarte's domestic and international stature, and perhaps convince some former donors to renew funding to the FMLN [guerrillas]," a CIA report from September states.

U.S. embassy and AIFLD officials were determined to prevent the opposition labor coalition from capitalizing on the unpopularity of the austerity measures. So they set up a pro-Duarte labor coalition—the National Union of Workers and Campesinos (UNOC) and parallel government-backed unions in the public and private sector. "Much of the credit for UNOC's creation goes to AIFLD," a March 1986 U.S. embassy memorandum states. "AIFLD country director Clemente Hernandez worked tirelessly to bring UNOC founders together. AIFLD held a meeting with Salvadoran democratic labor leaders in Miami several weeks ago to discuss ways of unifying democratic labor and UNOC arose out of that meeting."

In theory, of course, there's nothing wrong with trying to fight communism through the creation of a competitive labor movement. Unfortunately, this one has not jumped onto the top ten list of popular mass movements. Soon after the coalition was founded, AIFLD and the Christian Democrats helped organize a march to show the world Duarte still had genuine, enthusiastic labor support. But *The New York Times* reported that "most of the marchers, who were trucked in by government backers, seemed only to be doing what they were told." Although coalition officials claim they are independent of Christian Democratic party control, numerous sources in the coalition said the demonstration was organized from the party's national headquarters in San Salvador and financed by AIFLD. And according to U.S. embassy documents, it was personally directed by Duarte's son, Alejandro.

More important than the rally was the creation of parallel unions. Here again, the Salvadoran government insists the unions are independent. But again, the U.S. left a paper trail showing the government actively involved in the creation of the new unions. A May 9, 1986, U.S. embassy memo states: "Democratic unions, especially [the Christian Democratic-affiliated branch of the UNOC] have been working with GOES [Govern-

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ment of El Salvador] either to take over leftist unions or to form rival democratic unions in leftist strongholds." The memo specifically notes the Salvadoran government efforts to set up these unions in the sewage and water works, the agricultural ministry, and the telecommunications company. Government-backed unions have also been established among postal workers, Housing Institute employees, and high-school teachers. The teachers were a key group to "reorganize," since they had been represented by a radical union with ties to the leftist guerrillas. In May, the union's leader was shot, allegedly by government troops.

It would be heartwarming to think that UNOC's success is based on a groundswell of support for Duarte, but other factors, such as AIFLD money, are behind it. For instance, AIFLD pays $4,000 a month to the construction federation controlled by UNOC leader Ricardo Soriano, a key organizer of parallel unions, according to high-ranking sources within his federation. AIFLD denies giving money to individual unions or leaders.

Workers note that failure to join the new union can be self-destructive. Holdouts are threatened with dismissal or accused of being communist sympathizers. In El Salvador, where right-wing death squads rarely wait for documentary evidence of communist sympathy, the mere accusation, can be hazardous to one's health. Opposition leaders who refuse to join the union have found themselves in prison, where they can be held incommunicado for two weeks. Labor activists comprise the largest group of political prisoners, according to the government's own prison lists. Unionists interviewed in Mariona prison claimed they had been subjected to psychological and occasionally physical torture. U.S. State Department sources say that abuse, such as prolonged food or sleep deprivation or immersion in filthy water, occurs in about one of five cases of imprisonment in El Salvador and Americas Watch claims such techniques are the dominant interrogation tools.

Finally, it has been helpful to UNOC that the body that certifies new unions is the Salvadoran government. In some cases it has authorized pro-government unions, or eliminated anti-Duarte ones, without holding real elections. For example, management set up a union at the 1,000-employee Industrias Unidas, one of the largest textile plants in El Salvador. To influence the outcome of a union election to be held in March 1986, AIFLD's deputy director Donald Kessler promised the union an $8,000 "loan." According to *The Wall Street Journal*, Kessler told the union point-blank: "If we're elected, you'll get the loan." On March 16, though, union officials backed by AIFLD walked out of the election. The Ministry of Labor ordered a second election in May, at which point the AIFLD-backed leaders left the general meeting and held a separate vote among their own supporters. Four days later, without explanation, the Ministry of Labor recognized that union.

The textile plant's original unionists, mostly unarmed women, went on strike to protest the decision. After 12 days, the government sent 159 national guardsmen to occupy the factory. Three days later the strike ended. The management of the factory, which was owned by a Japanese firm, then fired several hundred workers, destroying the original trade union. As in many other cases, replacements were hired only when they produced a recommendation from a friend or family member in the Christian Democratic party and agreed to join the new union.

UNOC's new parallel unions have made only minor inroads into workplaces still dominated by long-standing trade unions. But UNOC controls many peasant cooperative organizations, much of the construction industry, most municipal workers in San Salvador, and some individual firms such as the textile and candy factories. The more left-wing National Union of Salvadoran Workers dominates most of the public sector workforce, an equally large share of peasant organizations, and El Salvador's urban industrial base.

Besides death threats and bribes, what have workers gotten from their new alternative unions? Well, for one, workers have been part of a unique experiment in labor-management cooperation: Some unions have thrown out existing contracts and allowed management to write new ones. At Confiteria Americana, the biannual renewal of the contract that had been negotiated in 1979 was circumvented, and management is writing a new contract for the new parallel union to approve. At the first formal assembly of the candy factory's parallel union last September, management officials were visibly in charge. I was evicted from the meeting after one company/union official entered the room and asked why I was there.

More important, though, than their positions on particular contracts is their record on broader reform issues. The land reform, initiated in 1980, has affected only 18 percent of peasant families. Duarte insists that the redistribution of coffee farms will eventually proceed, but privately, government officials concede the political

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strength of the landowners makes the plan unlikely. The minimum wage for agricultural laborers, who work only when coffee or other export crops are in season, is $1.60 a day. Only 10 percent of the urban workforce is unionized, and their average hourly wage is about 40 cents. This year's inflation rate is projected to hit 60 percent; real wages have fallen abysmally behind.

Yet these new unions have not seriously opposed Duarte's austerity measures, fought for higher wages, or pressured the government to redistribute land. For example, prior to UNOC's first demonstration, labor leaders obtained a personal promise from Duarte that the land reform for coffee farms would proceed. But one and a half years later, with no such reform in sight, the unions have not questioned the government's failure. As a result, the left-influenced National Union of Salvadoran Workers, which persistently clamors for the reforms, has been considered more responsive to workers' needs. If the pattern continues, the rebel involvement in the unions is likely to become even greater. As one CIA report noted, "As their battlefield prospects continue to wane, we expect to see rebel commanders, who earlier rejected the political struggle, putting more money and manpower into strengthening their support among labor." U.S. policymakers are well aware of the dangers of leaving social needs unmet. "Deteriorating economic conditions have hurt Duarte's standing with workers and peasants—his traditional constituents—who are the key element of the guerrillas' political strategy," the CIA report said.

U.S officials do not fear a military victory of the left; the guerrilla brigades are too weak and the right and the army are too strong. They are concerned, though, that an increasingly vocal and militant organized opposition will provoke another wave of violent right-wing repression of the kind that racked the country more than six years ago. By splitting the labor movement through the parallel unions, the U.S. hopes to weaken that opposition. A little anti-democratic union-busting now, the reasoning goes, will avoid great carnage later.

But the strategy isn't working, and can't work. What they are splitting is Duarte's political base. The opposition movement continues to consolidate worker support for a simple reason. The more left-wing unions have responded to grievances, the pro-Duarte unions have not. The main result of AIFLD's union-busting is to make Duarte, in the eyes of the workers, resemble El Salvador's repressive military governments of the past. ■

WHO'S WHO

His old pals at the White House say that **Oliver North** should thank God for **Brendan Sullivan**. According to those who know Ollie, Sullivan kept interrupting just as he was really getting rolling and what politely might be called his more eccentric side was about to be revealed....

Swords tend to be sheathed in the last couple years of an administration. At least this is so in terms of the internal warfare that usually rages at the White House. As the power that can be gained through a bureaucratic power play diminishes, the motivation to try to pull one off decreases. So this is one explanation for the relatively peaceful atmosphere. Another is the soothing personality of **Howard Baker**. If any power struggle exists it is between **Kenneth Duberstein** and **Thomas Griscom** over who will be the real number two power behind Baker. Duberstein is winning in terms of appearances—he chairs senior staff meetings in Baker's absence—but Griscom seems to have the most real swack. **James Miller**, who, we reported several months ago, did not enjoy Baker's highest esteem, has improved his standing somewhat with the chief of staff. But when Miller recently told Baker in a staff meeting to "trust me" on a proposed matter, Baker said, "Well, of course I do Jim, but that does not extinguish my curiosity."

All is not smooth sailing of course. If you've been wondering who has been leaking the stories to the press about how bad a job Howard Baker is doing, the answer, we are told, is none other than **Michael Deaver**. It seems the former White House aide has been using his cronies in the press to achieve his goal of installing his own man, **John Herrington**, the secretary of Energy, in Baker's job....

In— *Defense:* General Counsel—**Kathleen A. Buck**. Assistant Secretary for Special Operations and Low Intensity Conflict—**Kenneth Bergquist**. *Justice:* Director, Federal Bureau of Investigations—**William Sessions**. *Commerce Secretary* **C. William Verity Jr.** is replacing **Malcolm Baldrige**, deceased.

JOB

We soon will have an opening for a reporter-editor. Desirable qualifications include practical experience working in or writing about politics and government. More important are intelligence, humor, and the willingness to work long hours for low pay. Applications should be accompanied by a list of at least three references, and by writing samples, not necessarily published but designed to demonstrate fact-gathering and analytical ability.

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EXHIBIT

September 17, 1986

ACTION

MEMORANDUM FOR JOHN M. POINDEXTER

FROM: OLIVER L. NORTH

SUBJECT: Support

Released on 29 June 1997
under provisions of E.O. 12356
By B. Reger, National Security Council

Attached at Tab I is a memo from you to Don Regan regarding restoration of discrete transportation support. The memo is prepared so that you can pass it directly to the Chief of Staff without sending it through normal channels.

Over a year ago, with Bud McFarlane's concurrence, I arranged with Ed Hickey to have my name placed on the access list for White House transportation. To my knowledge, this fact was made known to no one outside White House Military Office and the dispatchers at the White House garage. Bud endorsed this action based on the frequent need for me to travel quickly, on short notice, often transporting highly sensitive material. I do not believe that this service was ever abused. I certainly did not consider it to be "perk." Rather, it has been a means by which I have been able to get my job done.

Last Friday evening, while Defense Minister Rabin's aide waited, I was advised by the White House dispatcher that my name had been removed from the access list for White House cars. Eventually, after calling the President's military aide, a car was made available -- and I was a half-hour late for the short notice meeting with Rabin at 2130.

Yesterday, to save both time and money, I opted to go to the CentAm Conference in Miami via military aircraft. When I arrived at the White House at 0400, I tried to get a car and could not. A taxi took nearly 40 minutes to get here and was delayed 15 minutes at the Andrews AFB gate. I almost missed the flight. Last night, on return, I had to wait 2 hours for a taxi to pick me up and bring me back to the White House. On both trips, I was, of necessity, carrying significant amounts of classified material.

I have never whined before and do not mean to do so now, but it is becoming increasingly difficult to do my job. Not only can I not get my secretary promoted, I cannot even get regular staff badges for two of the finest staff officers on the NSC.

1329

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CHARMING HER WAY to the WHITE HOUSE

Air travel stinks, auto safety is a joke—and Washington still loves Liddy Dole

by Philip Weiss

"She's progressive at the core"—a former aide to Elizabeth Dole, quoted in Fortune.

"She is essentially a conservative person"—Virginia Knauer, Dole's former boss in the Nixon White House.

This summer, when every day seemed to bring another report of a close call in the skies, the media began taking a keen interest in air safety. Typical was the *Newsweek* cover story, "The Year of the Near Miss," which declared, "America's air-travel system is showing signs of breakdown. Reports of midair near collisions are soaring, errors by controllers are on the rise and the flying public's tolerance for cattle-car conditions and horrendous delays is wearing thin." You'd think that such an article would include a rather pointed crtitique of whoever's responsible for the mess. But the article, like other pieces about airline chaos, lacked any criticism of the Secretary of Transportation, Elizabeth Hanford Dole. The piece did not picture Dole, mentioned her only three times, and then in a positive light—even though her policies are largely to blame for the crisis.

The widespread image of Elizabeth Dole is of a politically moderate, competent, woman cabinet secretary, a view she has tried to reinforce by promoting herself as the "safety secretary." Her positive image has survived the doubling of airplane near-misses, an 18 percent increase in air traffic controller errors, and 19 major airline mergers. Though she has ignored auto safety problems that have killed thousands of people and weakened auto recall efforts, her policies have had no ill effect on the staggering number of invitations she gets to speak across the country or the lavishness of praise bestowed by feature columnists.

Dole is no antiregulation ideologue. But she is a species just as common in Washington—the consummate role player, her positions defined by her job description rather than deeply felt beliefs. Indeed she has been the Wallenda of Washington's big top, performing astounding flips throughout 21 years in top government posts, starting with the Johnson administration. She has gone from Democrat to Independent to Republican and espoused such divergent positions as (circa 1975) urging the breakup of a major oil company to (circa 1986) approving mergers in which an airline got 80 percent of a market. Or (circa 1973) calling for Congress to create a consumer advocacy agency dealing with those who "oppress" consumers to (circa 1987) opposing Congress's bipartisan effort to tell consumers how well airlines were meeting their schedules.

Yet today, Dole's political stock seems more secure than ever. Profiles now mention her role as not just a potential First Lady if Senator Robert Dole's campaign succeeds but as a presidential or vice presidential candidate in her own right. "She has the dynamism and magnetism that make people want to come up and meet her," marvels Charles Black, the campaign manager for Rep. Jack Kemp, one of her husband's opponents. "It could be next year, or ten years from now, but I'll be very surprised if she is not on the ticket one of these days." If she gets that far it will be interesting to see if *The New York Times* still gives her this sort of ap-

Philip Weiss is a New York writer.

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Mon.

Tues.

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The week we put you in the hospital with AIDS.

What you don't know about it can kill you. And misconceptions about it can be almost as destructive as death is to those who have it. ow that we know AIDS everyone's disease, not just ubculture infection, we have to live with it. And derstand it

So Newsweek checked in on Hofheimer 4, a hospital wing where people live with AIDS every day. And made the experience so real, you felt as if you checked in, too.

We took you on rounds with Dr. Gerald Friedland as he led his fight against the plague. You got to know his

patients; their personal battles for life, their isolation and anger. You felt the powerlessness the medical team felt each time AIDS denied their roles as healers.

And, in the end, you felt the loss. Just as Dr. Friedland did each time he lost a patient and a frie

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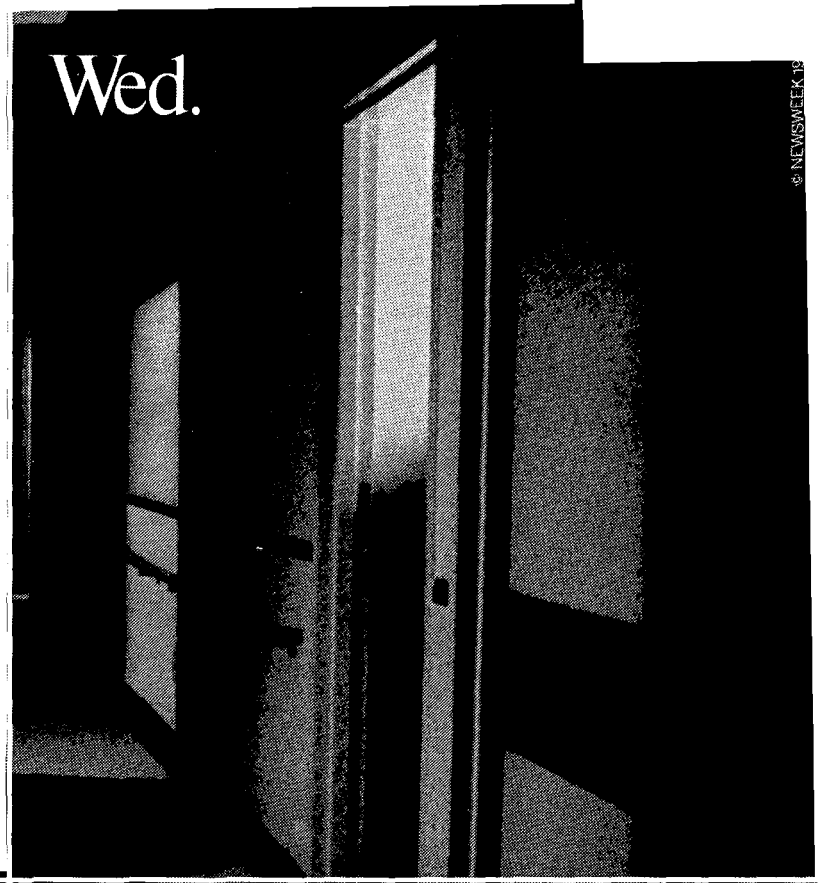

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praisal: "One of the most stunning women in Washington—slender, blue-eyed, and fair-skinned, with dark hair worn in a flippy style that she says is 'my first blow-dry hairdo; I'm worried that it might be too flat on top.' "

May Queen Liddy

Mary Elizabeth Hanford was born 51 years ago in Salisbury, North Carolina, a small city halfway between Charlotte and Winston-Salem, where she grew up extremely well-off. Her mother, Mary Hanford, talks of a pet chihuahua; there were also horseback riding lessons, water skiing, ballet, tennis, piano, a weekend house, a debutante ball, and the guiding thought that she could get anything she wanted. She was the second child by many years of a rich florist who was locally regarded as conservative and dour. Her mother belonged to the National Society of the Colonial Dames of America, a largely southern group whose members trace their lineage to a noteworthy individual in colonial service, thus gaining status over the Daughters of the American Revolution. In time, the daughter, too, would become a Colonial Dame.

Friends say that even at a young age Elizabeth (or "Liddy," as she named herself when beginning to talk) was drawn to public activities. "She always loved to participate," her mother says, noting that she rushed off Saturdays to help a neighborhood woman organize activities for the Children of the American Revolution. As a child, as she would so often as an adult, Liddy Hanford campaigned. She was a toddler when she won a competition to be the mascot of the graduating high school class of her brother, who was 13 years her senior, and in third grade she was president of a class club. At the Woman's College at Duke, Hanford was elected president of the student body and majored in political science.

Hanford had been brought up with the values of a traditional southern woman—her mother urging her to study home economics and then come back to Salisbury—and in many ways she hewed to her genteel raising. She joined a Duke sorority and was selected in her senior year to a secret society of seven members called White Duchy. College friends remember her as being popular in part for her beauty, and when she was elected the May Queen she reigned over the spring dance with her court. Later she worked part time as a model.

Such traditional choices for a good-looking, socially well-placed woman were alloyed even then with a desire to enter the traditionally male world of politics. Childhood friend Wyndham Robertson says that while it was easy to picture Elizabeth being comfortable as the housewife of a Charlotte businessman with club memberships and all the rest, she was too driven for that. She went to the Harvard Graduate School of Education and later entered the law school there, by which time she'd crossed a certain divide. "We were both considered to be old maids from the time we were 25," Robertson says. "We used to laugh about it and had a pact not to get married." Another friend explains that Dole didn't stop to have a family in part because she was so driven. "She had a lot of discipline about her. Most people in our age category had more zigs and zags."

One thing Elizabeth Hanford acquired forthrightly were political connections. "She walked through the door, she didn't have an appointment and we hired her that afternoon," says Bill Cochrane, the former administrative assistant to B. Everett Jordan, the late Democratic senator from North Carolina. "Phi Beta Kappa at Duke and the Queen of May—she was extremely qualified."

A "good Democrat" and "a liberal" in the descriptions of various associates, she served for several months as a legislative secretary to Jordan, a moderate Democrat. Because she was "personable and attractive," Cochrane recommended her to LBJ's staff when the senator needed southerners to help organize a whistle-stop campaign tour for his vice presidential campaign in October 1960. She ended up on the train for five days as a greeter, taking the names and addresses of townspeople who clambered on one town up the line from their own so they could accompany LBJ those 30 miles and then mill around him on the platform as he gave a speech to their neighbors.

In subsequent summers she worked at other liberal station stops, the United Nations and Peace Corps, and after law school flew back to Washington, which, she said, attracted her "like a magnet." At the time Washington was possessed by Johnson's vision of a Great Society, and so was Elizabeth Hanford. One friend remembers her as a "Harvard liberal." She worked at the Department of Education, organizing a conference on the education of the deaf, and upon leaving the job in 1967 went into private practice providing legal representation to indigents. In one case she took on a recent immigrant, a former

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zoo keeper, who was accused of petting a lion in the National Zoo without consent; Hanford won the case by pointing out that since the prosecution had not called the lion to testify it was impossible to say the defendant had stroked it without consent.

"She walked in right off the darn street and had a resume that looked like a million dollars, and she had these names on there," recalls her next boss, Leslie Dix, who hired Hanford in 1968 for President Johnson's Committee on Consumer Interests. Among the names were former North Carolina Gov. Terry Sanford and the late Democratic Senator Sam Ervin, Jr. "A great girl, wonderful," Dix recalls of her references. "Everything was a four-star rating."

Johnson had established the committee in 1964 as the consumer's voice within the administration—"we were gung-ho," says Betty Furness, who as the director put through such pioneering legislation as the truth in lending and wholesome meat laws. Hanford worked on legislation. Furness says, "She seemed to be right with us," a fierce consumer advocate.

Thus Furness and Dix were a bit surprised that when Richard Nixon came into the White House ten months later, and they left, their right-thinking associate Hanford remained on the job, though the office's view of consumer advocacy changed sharply. Under Virginia Knauer, the office had more of a good housekeeping aura, intent on distributing product information to people and ironing out problems with manufacturers. Consumers, Hanford told Congress, complained more than anything about automobiles—lemons, safety problems, and so on—but office procedure was to call the manufacturer and work things out individually. "Industry has been pleased with this method," she told Congress.

"Whether Elizabeth changed her mind or changed her colors, I don't know," Furness says. One thing Hanford did change was her registration, from Democrat to Independent.

Knauer was smitten by Hanford ("she's a tremendously dedicated worker, she doesn't step on toes") and elevated her rapidly to executive director. Hanford's faultless social skills made her a political asset; Knauer recalls her "exquisite parties." In the congressional oversight proceedings, Knauer sometimes pushed Hanford out front to make the case for the committee's expansion, in part, Knauer observes, because she was "very beautiful, always a lady." Her honeyed approach before an almost all-male Congress made the case for a bigger budget that much more effective. The office burgeoned, changing from a committee to a commission and at last to a "full-fledged office of the presidency," as Hanford put it proudly.

Called on the carpet

"The White House called and said, 'Is Liddy Hanford acceptable?' " remembers Michael Pertschuk, then on the staff of the Senate Commerce Committee. "And I said, 'No.' "

It was 1973, and Hanford was at one of the few stumbling points in her career: urged on by Knauer, Nixon was going to nominate her to the Federal Trade Commission. But Congress was ready for a fight. It regarded Nixon as anti-consumer and made it clear the next FTC nominee had to be a strong consumer advocate.

As usual, Hanford had the support of North Carolina—Senator Ervin and his new colleague, Jesse Helms, the latter not failing to remark that she was "lovely. . .attractive"—but pull would not be enough. Consumer advocates thought of her as a White House insider, associated with a consumer office that often seemed toothless in the face of big business. Of particular concern was the carpet manufacturers episode. Nixon had failed to impose tougher flammability standards on the carpet industry, some of whose leading executives had made contributions to the Committee to Reelect the President in 1972. Hanford had been in on a meeting in the White House in the summer of 1972 when carpet manufacturers, frustrated by government regulations, complained angrily to Special Counsel Charles W. Colson and Maurice Stans, the secretary of commerce. Hanford explained later that she merely made the case that the industry should work out a voluntary program of compliance with flammability standards, but the incident cast doubt on her role in the office. This is why Pertschuk was unequivocal when the White House called.

But Pertschuk had barely hung up the phone when who should come to his door but Elizabeth Hanford herself. "What can I do?" she said. Pertschuk allowed that if she really had consumerist fervor she should go to a convention that was meeting that week and get some endorsements.

The next week the White House called again. Hanford had orchestrated a blizzard of endorsements from consumer advocates across the country, and though many consumer groups continued to be wary of her, Pertschuk says, "there was no way she could be stopped—she'd immediately figured out the problem and figured out how to beat me."

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"It could be next year, or ten years from now, but I'll be very surprised if she is not on the ticket one of these days," says Charles Black, Jack Kemp's campaign manager.

Indeed, at the subsequent hearings on her appointments, Hanford made all the right noises. She spoke of "abuses" against consumers, inveighed against "giant conglomerate firms," committed herself to the "renewed consumer-oriented thrust" of the FTC, and called on the government to establish an independent consumer protection agency. As for antitrust, she flatly disavowed the increasingly popular view that markets can be efficient and competitive even if one company holds an overwhelming share. "The law is fairly settled on that issue," she said. She was confirmed.

Trustbusting and dog food

While the consumer affairs office had operated under the cautious supervision of the White House, the FTC was an independent agency much more susceptible to pressure from Congress, particularly in this activist period. Congress had endorsed aggressive use of FTC powers to ferret out fraud and bust up monopolies, and Hanford became an activist commissioner. "She was visibly very upset when she heard about consumer fraud, especially against disadvantaged groups," says Jeffrey Edelstein, who served as Hanford's attorney adviser. "She lived and breathed her work, she got to work at 8 in the morning and worked on weekends. She was very definitely the hardest-working public official I ever saw in Washington."

Some noted a temperament problem with difficult decisions: extreme caution, an inability to rule quickly. But in a passionate age, she also displayed passion. She was particularly vigorous on issues involving women, such as the quality of nursing home care, and on regulation of the auto companies. She wrote the FTC opinion blasting Ford and Chrysler for false advertising of fuel efficiency in their new cars and later signed a sweeping complaint against Ford for not informing customers of lubrication problems resulting in often costly damage to its engines. The case ended (after Dole departed the FTC) with Ford agreeing to put up signs in its showrooms and send out bulletins about a recall program.

As for antitrust, Dole almost never saw a merger she liked. She often argued that if the firm increased its market share even slightly the merger was illegal, and she was committed to the principle that the best market for consumers was one in which "there are many sellers, none of which has any significant market share." Thus when Liggett and Meyers, the number-four dog food manufacturer with 11 percent of the market in dog food, bought the sixth largest company, with 4.41 percent, the FTC ordered its divestment on grounds that "small but aggressive" independents must be maintained. In one of her infrequent dissents, Hanford even opposed a merger the majority of the FTC had allowed: the purchase by Budd, a maker of van trailers, of the tiny Gindy company, which also made such trailers. Dole said that Gindy was too important in a *subcategory* of the market, open-top van trailers, to be absorbed.

The power couple

Probably the most significant merger to take place during Hanford's years on the FTC happened December 6, 1975, when she married Senator Robert Dole, who had been divorced from his first wife.

Bob Dole was a former Republican National Committee chairman, and the marriage had political benefits for both him and his wife. At about the time she changed her name, Elizabeth Dole changed her registration again, from Independent to Republican. Within a few months she was dearly needed: a southern Democrat was

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running for president, and her husband was on the opposing ticket. In the Ford-Dole campaign against Carter-Mondale, Elizabeth Dole was what Bob called his "southern strategy," criss-crossing meridional climes. *The New York Times*, meanwhile, didn't fail to give her the once-over—"svelte figure, brunette hair, and eye-catching clothes."

Thus was born the Power Couple (she 39, he 52) that has charmed Washington, the features sections, and the women's magazines. *Newsweek* likened the Doles to Tracy and Hepburn, *Savvy* to Nick and Nora Charles. Profiles emphasized their mutual independence. Not long after the election, for instance, the two publicly debated the establishment of a consumer protection agency, then the holy grail of the consumer movement. ("The last person Bob debated was Fritz Mondale—and look what's happened to Fritz," she said.) The FTC commissioner was now a full-fledged consumer advocate and, scorning "business lobbyists," warned of a "public backlash" against business. Who would lead that backlash? Maybe Elizabeth Dole. The voice of business exceeds "by a long shot anything I have ever seen on the consumer side" in the halls of government, she declared.

Two years later Bob announced for president. Though he would later consider the run "a mistake of judgment," Elizabeth quit her FTC post, nearly two years before her term was over, to campaign, thus avoiding the charge that had arisen in 1976 that she was politicizing a quasi-judicial office. "From the first day she went out on the trail, she...had that natural ability," Charles Black, the political consultant who had been on Dole's staff, recalls. "She probably did more good for Bob Dole than he did for himself in that race."

After Bob's campaign fizzled, the sparkling Liddy chaired Voters for Reagan-Bush. That fall she headed a transition planning team and was mentioned as a possible secretary of education or Commerce or (amazingly) nominee to the Supreme Court.

Despite lobbying by Bob Dole, the White House had lesser plans for her. They made her assistant to the president for public liaison, a job once held by Chuck Colson but which has slowly lost its power in the Reagan years. Its prime function was to determine which special interest groups—blacks, farmers, Jews, women, or businessmen—would see the president. For anyone who wanted to earn a gold star within the Reagan administration the choice was easy: aggressively serve business.

And so the woman who a few years before had decried the influence of business lobbyists, who had warned that the slogan "caveat emptor" was about to be replaced by "vendor emptor," now spent the entire spring of 1981, according to David Stockman in *The Triumph of Politics*, rallying business lobbyists behind the White House's radical economic proposals. Indeed, she pushed their interests so hard that even officials of this staunchly pro-business administration were a little stunned. For example, when Stockman sought to remove accelerated depreciation provisions from the 1981 tax bill, she "practically tackled and hog-tied" White House chief of staff James A. Baker III, Stockman wrote. The woman who had threatened to muster a consumer backlash now threatened a business backlash against the Reagan revolution if business's views were not heeded. In part through her efforts, accelerated depreciation stayed right where it was.

Stockman and Baker grumbled, and Dole never made it into the inner circles of the Reagan White House. One reason was because her husband was attacking much of the '81 tax bill from the Senate floor; Dole was seen as a back channel to a Reagan rival. She was also a woman in a macho encampment whose more favored members (notoriously, Donald Regan) made insulting comments about women. In time, though, her womanhood came to be Dole's most prized attribute within the Reagan administration.

Secretary of gender gap

Feminists who have worked with Elizabeth Dole say she has always pushed for women's issues, and yet from the beginning of her service in the White House, her approach was remarkably conciliatory. She abandoned her commitment to the Equal Rights Amendment, explaining that "he's [Reagan's] not going to change on that." Later, women's groups became disturbed because Dole talked of being "gagged" on their concerns; Reagan simply wasn't interested in hearing about them. Dole herself later joked about having been muzzled for 13 months, during which her greatest accomplishment for women apparently was arranging an audience with the president for a group of female go-getters from the financial community.

Everything changed in 1982 when the Reagan administration awakened to the "gender gap," the theory that Reagan had so alienated a voting bloc of women on peace and welfare issues that unless

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he did something fast Republicans would take it on the chin in the 1982 elections. One poll said 42 percent of men but only 34 percent of women would vote for a congressman who supported the president's positions. Richard Wirthlin, the president's pollster, explained that Republicans had to show they knew that women's issues were "not a casual concern."

At about this time, Pat Reuss, legislative director of the Women's Equity Action League, got a phone call from the White House. "Pat," said Elizabeth Dole, "guess what I've just done. I've got some of the high level men in this administration behind a task force. . .we're going to look at the federal codes, all our laws and regulations, at every level, to find discrimination against women." Thus the Reagan administration's widely promoted alternative to the ERA: the Task Force on Legal Equity for Women, aimed at ferreting out federal regulations, policies, and practices that discriminated against women—the E and the R without the A.

Later that year, Reuss received another invigorating call from Dole. Again with kettle drums and cymbals, the Reagan administration had named a White House Coordinating Council on Women, led by Dole, to serve as a clearinghouse in the administration on women's concerns. As a result, Reagan got behind some bills to help women, including one that stiffened child support laws and another that made pension systems fairer to women whose spouses die short of retirement or whose own careers are interrupted.

But the gender gap wouldn't go away, and a fearful administration threw up another bulwark, Elizabeth Dole's promotion. In early 1983, again after her husband's lobbying, she was named as the first woman transportation secretary, replacing the departing Drew Lewis.

Fixing the table settings

From the beginning Dole was obsessed with publicity. One morning she appeared at the department's parking entrance with a STOP sign in her hands, halting cars to make sure employees were buckling their seat belts, a photo opp of Secretarial dimensions. When things went poorly, though, she became more camera shy. In December 1984 Dole threw a media event in the Mojave desert, gathering 600 reporters and VIPs at Edwards Air Force Base to view a long-hyped experiment of a special airplane fuel that would supposedly prevent explosions during crash landings. The department was going to use remote control to crash-land an old Boeing filled with integrated black and white dummies. Dole held a press conference before the crash, but when the plane exploded and burned on impact, she "went out the back door," in the words of one former DOT employee. Dole's office said she had an appointment on the coast—in any case, FAA Administrator Donald Engen was left to field the embarrassing questions.

On occasion she has even taken credit for policies she vehemently opposed. For example, she was against a bill that ordered the DOT to tell American travelers which foreign airports had failed U.S. security examinations. The industry fought the law—it held out the prospect of regular, discouraging travel bulletins—and Dole called it "rigid, unilateral," and "counterproductive to international cooperation." But when Congress prevailed, arguing, as Rep. Norman Mineta put it, that the American public should know which airports "are hazardous to your health," Dole took credit, claiming in a travel publication that "I asked the Congress" to pass the notification procedure.

The secretary fretted over how things looked; one former DOT official says she ironed her skirt in her office before and after a ruffling and well-photographed helicopter trip. She went into a state over the table settings for a luncheon with Senate wives, twice changing them because they didn't look quite right. "Everyone was going crazy," he recalls. "It got the same scrutiny as something truly substantial."

This view of Dole clashes somewhat with her persona at the FTC—the hardworking, substantive commissioner signing sober opinions—but then Dole's role had changed as well. A lady in the Reagan administration wore a perfectly pressed skirt even on a helicopter, had perfect place settings, and was always available to the White House to put a pretty face on token initiatives. Cultural atavism, maybe, but the media ate it up. While *Harper's Bazaar* said Dole was a staunch feminist and the most powerful woman in America, it noted happily that her "graceful persistence. . .doesn't threaten those around her."

The administration soon reached its high-water mark for women in cabinet positions (three), but neither U.N. Ambassador Jeane Kirkpatrick (gravelly) nor Secretary of Health and Human Services Margaret M. Heckler (intractable) could be counted on as window dressing for the administration's policies on women, and inevitably the job fell to Dole (effusive). The administra-

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tion regarded her above all as a political asset, or as Bob Dole (pragmatic) told *Newsweek* months before the convention, "If they're smart, they'll just buy her a road map and an airplane and say, 'See you after the election.' "

So Dole made the rounds of the women's magazines and rallied women as she had consumers and businessmen before that. Again and again she said that the president's record on women's issues "is not fully understood." Again and again she confessed that over her career she had helped usher in a "quiet revolution, this tidal wave," and that the president's Task Force on Legal Equity would advance the cause further. And when Barbara Honegger, a top staff member for the task force, resigned and labeled the effort a "sham" on the op-ed page of *The Washington Post*, Dole was there for the president, announcing her strong "support" for the government-wide "Women's Equality Day" in honor of the 63rd anniversary of the Nineteenth Amendment.

Then the Democrats nominated Geraldine Ferraro, and Dole became even more important. Republicans feared a women's backlash, especially since the Dallas convention, spurred by Jesse Helms, adopted its most conservative platform ever, including planks to extend the Fourteenth Amendment's protections to the unborn and to limit anti-discrimination stipulations in education funding. (The party had abandoned its traditional support of the ERA in 1980.) The staunch feminist Elizabeth Dole seemed to have a cast-iron stomach as she was wheeled out to give a prime-time speech assuring women voters that the administration cared—the president was concerned with "choices" and "opportunities" rather than "promises" for women. Later that fall one of her chores was doing a frothy political ad on her long relationship with Helms, who was locked in a bilious but ultimately successful campaign against former North Carolina Gov. Jim Hunt ("her job was to make Helms look like a human being," says Geoffrey D. Garin, a former consultant to Hunt).

She rationalized her positions by noting that the administration's economic changes would create more jobs for women and that economic issues were most important to women. Yet at the very time she was pumping up the White House Coordinating Council on Women as a vanguard of "this quiet revolution, this tidal wave," the council had little influence within the administration. It has even less today. I made perhaps a dozen calls to the White House to track the council down and drew an absolute blank. "I don't think that's any longer in effect," said Albert R. Brashear, a White House spokesman.

As for the E and the R without the A, the final report of the celebrated Task Force on Legal Equity was produced in April 1986, and while it prompted gender-sanitization efforts in federal codes—the Soil Conservation Service started using photos of women in its brochures—it stopped well short of addressing fundamental problems. "Cosmetic," Justice's William Bradford Reynolds bluntly termed it. The report has by all accounts simply lain there without any official action.

You can't blame Elizabeth Dole for the administration's flaccidity on women's issues. Indeed, there's evidence that she quietly lobbied the cabinet without much effect. Yet her brief and passionate public lip service leaves a disturbing question about her political nerve. By 1983 and 1984 she had become immeasurably valuable to the Reagan administration in an area, women's rights, close to her heart. Despite the great political capital Dole had built up, she seems not to have exacted much more from Reagan beyond his tolerance for dozens of women in high offices in Transportation and a women's exercise room on the tenth floor of the building.

And anyway Reagan's female trouble was over. The gender gap turned out not to figure in the '84 elections, and Elizabeth Dole was able to get back to her role as "the safety secretary."

Sardine can

Raymond Lee was working in a field outside Snow Hill, North Carolina, in May 1985, when he heard wrenching noises from nearby Route 13 and rushed up through the tobacco plants to the road. The scorched highway was strewn with pickles and corn—a truck had collided with another vehicle head on. He followed a trail of tennis shoes, hair brushes, and other human debris to a shattered school bus that had been thrown to the side of the road. Injured children lay about, including four of Lee's kids, among them James, 12, who reached out for his father and then died, according to an account in the *Charlotte Observer*. Five other school children were killed, and 21 kids suffered injuries, many of them serious. One witness said the bus had opened up like a sardine tin. Its left side was stripped open, and towards the back of the bus the floor had split neatly apart along a seam, leaving a gaping four-foot hole through which as many as three children were ejected.

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Dole's Transportation Department has refused to act on the Ford park-to-reverse problem, which is blamed for killing hundreds of people, mostly small children and the elderly, who aren't able to scramble out of the way of lurching cars.

Although such a serious collision would have injured passengers regardless of the bus construction, the floor break was notable because the bus's manufacturer, Thomas Built, had for some time sparred with the Department of Transportation over its floor joints. Thomas Built said the floors were "access panels" and thus not covered by a regulation mandating strong joints. For a time, the DOT had countered this absurdity, pointing out that the floors met the definition: "external or internal body panels." Thomas Built's floors had repeatedly failed strength tests, which called for joints between panels to be at least 60 percent as strong as the panels themselves. Tests done by the DOT's National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) during the Carter administration showed that the joints were less than half as strong as they should be, and NHTSA had begun an investigation of the company.

When Ronald Reagan came into office in 1981, he declared that the U.S. auto industry was "virtually being regulated to death," and NHTSA ceased to enforce some rules and stopped developing many others. Tests of the Thomas Built floors ended, and in spring 1985, at about the time of the Snow Hill accident, the DOT dropped its investigation of earlier violations. In fact, after the wreck, the National Transportation Safety Board (NTSB), an independent body that investigates accidents, combed the wreckage and found that the floor-joints were only 7 percent as strong as the sheets of steel they held, a fraction of what NHTSA had once required. NTSB suggested that the floor construction may have been responsible for one child's death and serious injuries to two others.

Dole has declared over and over that safety is her highest priority, and in promoting that view she hasn't hesitated to use the deaths of schoolchildren. A few months after the Snow Hill wreck, for instance, she gave a speech citing the case of a truck that killed a child who had just gotten off a school bus. But that child's case ("tragic...innocent," said Dole) illustrated a driver's problem; Dole was advocating a program for single licensing of truck drivers so that they cannot rack up violations in one state and get a clean license in another. The Snow Hill case implicated a manufacturer, and on such matters Dole has been assiduous in not making rules and not speaking out.

Lurching cars

Elizabeth Dole, of course, has had successes at Transportation besides single licensing of truck drivers. She added more FAA inspectors, went after airlines for deceptive scheduling, and campaigned for higher drinking ages.

Two relative bright spots in auto rule-making came early on. One was her 1983 rule ordering a high center-mounted brake light on all cars. Although it does not save lives, the rule is said to save millions in auto repair bills and hundreds of injuries each year.

Then there was the airbag rule. In 1984 Dole ordered a gradual phase-in of passive restraints—automatic seat belts or airbags—in all cars beginning in 1987. It was "probably the most difficult public policy issue" she ever tackled, she says, and plainly she was torn: the Reagan administration had opposed the airbag rule and yet Dole herself had said good things about airbags when she came into office and had them installed in her official Lincoln. Most important, the Supreme Court had ruled unanimously that the Reagan adminstration's recision of an earlier airbag regulation violated the charter of the Transportation Department, which, after all, came to life in the mid-sixties at the time of Ralph Nader's historic study of auto safety, *Unsafe at Any Speed*. Thus Dole had little choice but to make a rule, and after some delay she did. (Even then, she almost sabotaged the rule by including a provision under which airbags would not be re-

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quired if a certain number of states passed seat belt laws.)

Certainly her relentless speechifying about drunk driving and other safety issues is better than Drew Lewis's silence. But aside from the flawed airbag stance, it's difficult to see when she ever used her political weight to fight either auto companies or, just as important, the paladins of the Office of Management and Budget who calculate the costs and benefits.

When I asked her in an interview about one rule to improve auto safety in side crashes and another applying car safety standards to light trucks, she said brightly, "We're working on that." Meanwhile, however, Dole's office told Congress they "strongly oppose" action on those very rules. Senator John C. Danforth, a Missouri Republican, termed this position "blatant evidence of further DOT foot-dragging" on safety issues.

Perhaps most significantly, Dole has failed to apply existing safety standards to increasingly popular light trucks and minivans, even though small pickups and jeep-like vehicles have death rates up to four times higher than those of large cars. In fact, during rollovers, these vehicles have twice or triple the death toll of even small cars. But the DOT has insisted more study is needed before it will apply roof strength requirements of passenger cars to these vehicles. It has also remained silent on when the airbag rule will be applied to light trucks.

The list of inactivity on auto safety is a long one: Transportation has failed to act on the NTSB's August 1986 recommendation that the department take "immediate" action to order three-point seat belts in back seats; the simple lap belt may do more harm than good in accidents and has been implicated in some gruesome injuries. And after years of promises the DOT still hasn't set a side crash standard for cars. Side impact kills 9,000 people a year; many deaths could be avoided with some easy adjustments like moving the front seat position with respect to the door post.

Interestingly, the department has even opposed publishing information about how cars and bumpers perform in crashes, just the sort of consumer information Dole pushed for as FTC commissioner. "Where the federal government has in its possession objective comparative test data, the government should make it available to the public," Dole told Congress in 1973.

Similarly, although Dole's DOT has slightly increased auto recalls over Drew Lewis's years, Dole has worked out the auto problems much as she had under Richard Nixon: communicating quietly with the manufacturer. Dole's department has opened very few formal investigations, generally limiting them to "preliminary analyses," which are out of the public eye, as the Center for Auto Safety has observed. The DOT says recalls proceed far more quickly this way. "What's to be accomplished by embarrassing the manufacturers in public?" one DOT official adds. In fact, "embarrassing the manufacturers" is a good way of informing the public of potential defects and getting companies to take these problems more seriously.

On occasion, when a defect requires tough, public action, the DOT is passive. For example, the DOT has refused to act on the Ford park-to-reverse problem, the tendency of many pre-1981 Ford cars to slip into reverse. The problem is blamed for killing hundreds of people, mostly small children and the elderly who aren't able to scramble out of the way of the lurching cars.

Then there's the Audi 5000. A year ago public outcry forced the department to investigate the car, which, in more than 1,500 cases, has reportedly experienced sudden and violent acceleration. Six deaths have been ascribed to the defect, including that of a boy run over by his mother. So far Audi and the DOT have agreed to a recall measure that in essence endorses the company's position that fumbling drivers are responsible for the incidents. Marion Weisfelner, leader of Audi Victims Network, fearing no action to address what she and others believe is a dangerous flaw, repeatedly sought to bring her group of Audi "victims" to meet with Dole, but was always referred to NHTSA. "We'll come anytime—I don't understand what she's so busy doing that she can't take an hour."

One answer is giving speeches. Elizabeth Dole is one of the four or five most requested speakers on the Republican circuit (at 6,000 invitations a year) and is always flying hither and yon. About a year ago, not long before Weisfelner began pestering her, Dole told a St. Louis audience, "We will not shirk our duty to regulate on behalf of public safety. But neither will we forget that before one can lead, one must listen. My door, I assure you, is always open; so is my mind."

Fly the crowded skies

Dole's auto safety record leaves us with a paradox: if Elizabeth Dole is so politically astute and ambitious, why can't she see that highway safety is the classic motherhood issue? Govern-

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ment regulation in its behalf is all but universally viewed as one of the great success stories of big government. You'd think that Dole might have staked her claim with the public in defiance of Reagan ideology at least once. But throughout her career, Dole has drawn the lesson that advancement comes on the strength of connections, and that the best way to build those is to please your superiors and to play the part you are assigned. There's a stark contrast between Dole's complaisance and the profiles of independence that even this ideological administration has now and then produced. Surgeon General C. Everett Koop bucked the administration by talking frankly about AIDS. Otis Bowen, head of Health and Human Services, held Reagan's feet to the fire on catastrophic health insurance. Even Drew Lewis fought for and won a 5 cent gas tax hike at a time when Reagan was dead set against any taxes at all. But Dole is a role player in the tradition not of Otis Bowen but of Caspar Weinberger, the tight-fisted OMB director under Nixon who became the profligate defense spender under Reagan.

So Elizabeth Dole's record on air traffic safety should not come as a surprise. Of all the doctrinaire attitudes that Elizabeth Dole confronted—and adopted—when she took over at Transportation, perhaps none was as strong as the Reagan administration's contention that the air traffic control system could be run with fewer controllers than in the past. In August 1981, in a demonstration of its will, the infant administration fired 11,400 striking PATCO controllers and then struggled successfully to keep half the normal flights aloft.

Soon after Dole came into office, she worked to boost air traffic back to its pre-1981 levels—but with about half the number of controllers the Federal Aviation Administration had employed before the strike. She told Congress that within a few months the system would be working so smoothly the supervisors could step away from the control tubes and go back to their desks and the controllers could take leaves when they wanted.

For controllers who were being denied sick leave and forced to work six days a week, such chipper pronouncements were infuriating. Dole further stunned controllers by dismissing the notion that there was any stress unique to air traffic control, despite evidence of hypertension among those who work the monitors for hours on end. Morale began falling in 1984, and the same sorts of complaints that preceded the 1981 strike began cropping up again.

There was surely some merit in Reagan's position that the system could be run with fewer controllers. But to do so would have required her to violate two cardinal rules for being a good Reagan cabinet secretary: don't anger industry and don't spend too much money. For example, the air traffic problem could be reduced by refusing to give airlines permission to run so many flights during peak hours, a step Dole has been reluctant to take. And the traffic problems could also be eased through modernization. As critics have pointed out so often, some of the equipment the controllers use is fifties vintage, vacuum tube stuff—even though more than $5 billion has been set aside in special trust funds for modernization. Why wasn't it spent? Largely because the Reagan administration has used the fund to make the deficit seem smaller.

By spring this year, traffic was up to 120 percent of its pre-strike level, but there were 1,400 fewer controllers than at that time. Only 9,500 controllers were qualified at all tasks, compared to the 13,300 "full-performance" controllers on the job before the strike. And safety statistics began to worsen. The number of operational errors, down in the past two years, was up 18 percent in the first quarter. The controllers were organizing a union. Meanwhile, runway near-collisions caused by controller errors were rising rapidly, with half again as many in 1986 as there had been in 1984. Typical was a February incident in which a Continental 727 taking off from Los Angeles knocked off the tip of a tail of a Cessna that had been cleared to cross the runway. We seemed to be right back where we started. Congressmen began urging the DOT to hire back some of the old PATCO controllers on a part-time basis to ease the rush-hour crunches. But such creative solutions were not in Dole's arsenal; she insisted her request for an additional 225 more controllers for 1987-1988 was sufficient.

Congress grew increasingly irritated. "People who live in the system tell me it's unsafe," said Rep. Guy V. Molinari. Rep. Norman Y. Mineta, chairman of the aviation subcommittee, in March wrote Dole saying he was "shocked" and "disturbed" by her failure to hire more air traffic controllers. "I urge you to give this problem a much higher priority," Mineta concluded, a subtle reference to her busy political speaking schedule. He had been more blunt when earlier he told the *Journal of Commerce*: "I wish she would spend as much time on the job at the Department of Transportation."

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After her marriage to Senator Robert Dole, Washington feature writers fell in love with the Power Couple. *Newsweek* likened the Doles to Tracy and Hepburn, *Savvy* to Nick and Nora Charles.

But Dole was, typically, toeing the line. She accused the Congress of trying to "break faith with the American people" on airline modernization, yet she was against segregating the trust fund solely for capital improvements. She insisted almost blithely that the system was running smoothly. "You've all seen the allegations—that the Air Traffic Controller workforce is understaffed, inexperienced, and overworked," she told the American Society of Newspaper Editors in 1986. "The true story makes for less exciting headlines—something along the lines of—'Orderly Planning Keeps FAA Ahead of the Curve in Air Traffic Controller Needs.' "

In mid-May Dole and the administration got a shock when the National Transportation Safety Board issued a report saying the air traffic control system was overburdened and understaffed and warned that "the potential for a catastrophic accident will continue to increase during the 1987 summer months." The NTSB called on the DOT to reduce air traffic. DOT refused, saying things were under control.

By late spring, though, the administration gave a point. With near-misses up to roughly two a day, and some congressmen calling for re-regulation of the industry, Dole reversed herself on controller numbers. She sought 580 more instead of 225 more. The decision was portrayed in the press as having been pushed on Dole by FAA Administrator Donald Engen, who, reportedly weary of battling with Dole and her deputy, James H. Burnley IV, resigned his job at the end of June. Dole explained that the increase would be "making the system even safer."

19 and 0

In 1984 when Congress was trying to decide which agency should regulate airline mergers, some legislators had warned that the Transportation Department might not be sufficiently "insulated" to take on the job—too subject to political pressure, tending to see itself as an advocate of the industry. But those legislators were overruled. After all, the deregulation that began in 1978 was a huge success. The number of airlines had soared, prices crashed. Why worry?

Since then Elizabeth Dole has ultimately approved every single merger that has come before her—including three opposed by Edwin Meese's Justice Department. According to the Aviation Consumer Action Project, the market share of the ten largest carriers went from 73.3 percent in 1984 to 94.6 by last June. "The tendency of the department to be intimidated by the carriers is worse than at any time I'm aware of," says one former Carter Transportation official.

In approving the 19 mergers, Dole completely inverted the logic of her FTC decisions, which were so tied to market share data. Today she has argued that even a merger producing market shares in excess of 75 percent—as TWA's acquisition of Ozark did for emplanements in St. Louis and Northwest's acquisition of Republic did in Minneapolis—can be legal. She earlier had broken another tenet of her FTC days, that a scrappy competitor must be preserved to police an already concentrated market. She allowed United, which had offered discount fares as a fringe competitor in a highly concentrated market, to gain 26 percent of the market thereby becoming part of the cartel it had once disrupted.

"There has been an evolution in antitrust analysis over 20 years, but the consistency [in my thinking] has always been concern for the consumer," Dole explained to me. "There is now more an orientation toward—and the Supreme Court has done this—an emphasis on barriers to entry [rather than market share]. That's the key thing we use in our analysis here. If the barriers to competition are low, others are going to be able to move in, and the airline industry has traditionally had low barriers to entry as opposed to the industries we were regulating at the FTC."

But Dole's swing—from full faith in the importance of market share data to a strict refusal to be swayed by such evidence—is suspiciously extreme. Even the Justice Department, brimming with Chicago acolytes, uses market share data in weighing mergers. In fact, in opposing the Northwest-Republic case, the Justice Department argued that a merger would have significant "welfare" costs to consumers and that the airline might be able to triple prices on some routes out

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of Minneapolis without facing competition. Dole's suggestion that barriers to entering the airline business are lower than in the industries the FTC governed also seems questionable. The costs, after all, include a fleet of airplanes.

Not surprisingly, there hasn't been a flood of mom-and-pop entrepreneurs setting up airlines to discipline pricing since the merger mania began. In the days of computer reservation systems, frequent flyer programs, and international feed, small competitors tend to get swallowed (as both People and Presidential were) by the firms Dole not so long ago characterized as "giant conglomerates." For example, in 1985, at the height of competitive activity, seven carriers offered 38 flights a day on the Detroit to Boston route. Come June this year, only three carriers were flying the route, offering 11 flights—far below the service that existed before deregulation.

Finally, while Dole has criticized airlines for deceptive scheduling practices, the deregulatory chaos over which she presides has led to greater delays in general and increasing rider agitation about baggage loss. The DOT received six times more consumer complaints this June than a year before.

Reasonably OK

Although she has been better than her predecessor, Drew Lewis, on safety—he didn't even pay lip service to safety—Dole's record on these issues is considered among the weakest in the history of the department. "She comes in as a consumer advocate and misuses her reputation to avoid criticism," says Ralph Nader. Her administration has been "an epidemic of lost opportunities and surrendered authority." But the question arises, if her overall performance on safety and airline deregulation has been so disappointing, why has she lived such a charmed life in the press?

Partly it's because she associates herself so relentlessly with a noble issue, safety, inside an ideological administration; critics look on her as a beleaguered idealist deserving of sympathy rather than criticism. "She's made a decision like a lot of other insiders. 'If you weren't there, would anyone carry on the fight?' " says Ann F. Lewis, former executive director of Americans for Democratic Action, now a political consultant. "It's a great Washington tradition: hold your tongue and write your memoirs." Brian O'Neill, president of the Insurance Institute for Auto Safety, sharply criticizes Dole's inaction on a number of safety issues and concedes that her "reputation and title" as safety secretary are "probably not well deserved," but nonetheless adds that "given the administration's ideological constraints against regulation I would say she's doing a reasonably OK job."

The feminist community is even more charitable. "There's a very strong sense of liking her and the able manner in which she's conducted herself," says Irene Natividad, of the National Women's Political Caucus. After all, Dole has appointed many women and had great symbolic value as an apparently competent female manager of a vast organization. Indeed, with Heckler exiled to the North Sea and Kirkpatrick working the op-ed pages, Dole's the only woman left in the cabinet, a fact she exploits with her pilgrimages to the women's magazines and style pages, which routinely exult that she's the first woman to head a branch of the military (the Coast Guard). "She is among the most activist of them all, making safety a popular and emotional issue, her number one priority," quoth *Vogue*. Pat Reuss of the Women's Equity Action League agrees: "You see her everywhere, at hearings, airbag, safety stuff."

The trade press has often been critical. David Collogan, writing recently in *Business and Commercial Aviation* in an article headlined "Aviation 'Dole'-drums," scoffed at Dole's safety claims and said it was "absolutely essential" to remove her from "that nice paneled office." Among mainstream press, *The Washington Post* has been more critical of Dole than any other press outlet. But even in the *Post* tough stories are few and far between, interspersed with valentines about "The Power Couple," or "The Dance of the Doles" (her "North Carolina lilt," "her toughness behind a feminine, almost girlish manner"). These and other sappy profiles take Dole's safety assertions at face value. Last year *Savvy*, in a long piece called "Liddy in Overdrive," said that with the airbag decision "Dole and her staff accomplished in ten months what their predecessors could not do in 15 years," but left out the decisive Supreme Court decision forcing Dole's hand and her own stalling on the rule.

"Gosh"

I became aware of one reason the media has such a soft focus on Dole when I was ushered into Dole's office last June and seated opposite the secretary amid Steuben glass, plants, and

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photographs of Bob Dole: she's incredibly gracious and warm. A tape recording of an interview is filled with trilling laughs and surprised expressions like "gosh." She reminisced about lemonade, cookies, and Bible stories back in Salisbury. I felt like a heel for raising prickly issues.

She became defensive only when I asked her whether she had undergone a philosophical change over the years—campaigning for Johnson in '60 and Reagan in '84. Riding the whistlestop train, she said, was merely a chance opportunity she'd had as a senate staff member, a "kind of learning experience for me." When I persisted, she said you had to understand that old southern Democrats and modern southern Republicans have "basically the same kind of philosophy" she has today. If she'd reflected on how a Great Society liberal transformed into an eighties conservative, she didn't want to share those thoughts.

Occasionally, there was a scripted feel to her answers, a glimpse of her prim carefulness. When I asked about abortion, for example, she said, "It is the toughest question I have ever had to wrestle with, and frankly I am still wrestling with it." She had also given *The New York Times* the same answer seven years ago. ("I think it's just about the most difficult question there is, and one I'm still wrestling with.") But even in delivering that statement Dole looked me in the eye like she was confiding in me.

Of course, her appeal is based on more than mere social warmth. Dole glides right into our culture's soft spot for a traditional woman. Profiles routinely speak of Dole in the most nostalgic terms, as a dewy magnolia blossom, and when she walks into Senate hearing rooms, the members become so chivalrous you'd think the Round Table was in session. Political critics who are only too willing to take on James G. Watt and Edwin Meese steer clear when they see this damsel on the Conrail tracks.

Dole is shrewd, and she's seized on these attributes to ease her progress. "She could defuse angry tigers with dynamite in their mouths," says one observer of the airline industry. "I once saw a dozen men who all make lots of money and have lots of power so pissed off at her they couldn't fucking see straight. Then they went in to see her, and the issue was disposed of in 30 seconds." When I suggested to Dale A. Petroskey, Dole's press secretary, that Dole was a feminist, he amended that to say she was very "femin*ine*. . .appealing."

"She is to the Reagan administration what Jacqueline Kennedy was to Camelot—a glamorous, feminine presence, draped on a frame of steel."

Who said that? *Cosmo*? No, *Business Week*. In a time of greater female independence, Elizabeth Dole has turned out to be just what an uneasy establishment ordered, a woman of nominal authority but old-fashioned dependence. Our ambivalence about women in power has decreed her success.

On rare occasions, that dependence has truly irritated some legislators. In the middle of last spring's deliberations over whether to raise the 55 mph speed limit in rural areas, some congressmen started looking around for Dole. Opponents of the 55 mph speed limit were arguing that the limit was burdensome and unnecessary in less populated areas. Supporters were basing their arguments on safety—the 55 mph speed limit was thought to have saved 40,000 lives since its enactment in 1973 and the National Safety Council had called it the "best single device for saving lives and preventing injuries from motor vehicle accidents." In their fight they sought, as Senator Daniel P. Moynihan put it one day in frustration, "any material, any counsel, any presence even" from the Department of Transportation. How many lives would be lost at 65 mph? And why wasn't the safety secretary telling them?

As it turned out, Elizabeth Dole had errands to do. One of them was to travel to Iowa to open a campaign office for her husband and speak at a fundraiser. While the DOT wouldn't supply data or advice for the safety debate, Dole did mention the speed limit in Iowa, advocating it be *increased*. But that was to be expected. If she was ever to take on the administration on a controversial topic it wasn't then. Her husband, after all, is running for president, and to woo the party faithful, who vote heavily in primaries and caucuses, he has been running hard to the right. Once suspected of being a moderate, the longtime advocate of food stamps and civil rights legislation has lately allied himself with Jesse Helms, speaking increasingly about "Marxist tyranny in Angola and Nicaragua" and the liberals' "spend-and-appease ideas." In fact, a *Conservative Digest* poll placed him to the right of Senator Paul Laxalt and Rep. Jack Kemp.

It just wouldn't do to have the wife of such a candidate disputing the administration or joining forces with liberal activists. Elizabeth Dole has a lot more on her mind than just being the safety secretary. She's now a candidate for First Lady, her next great role in Washington. ■

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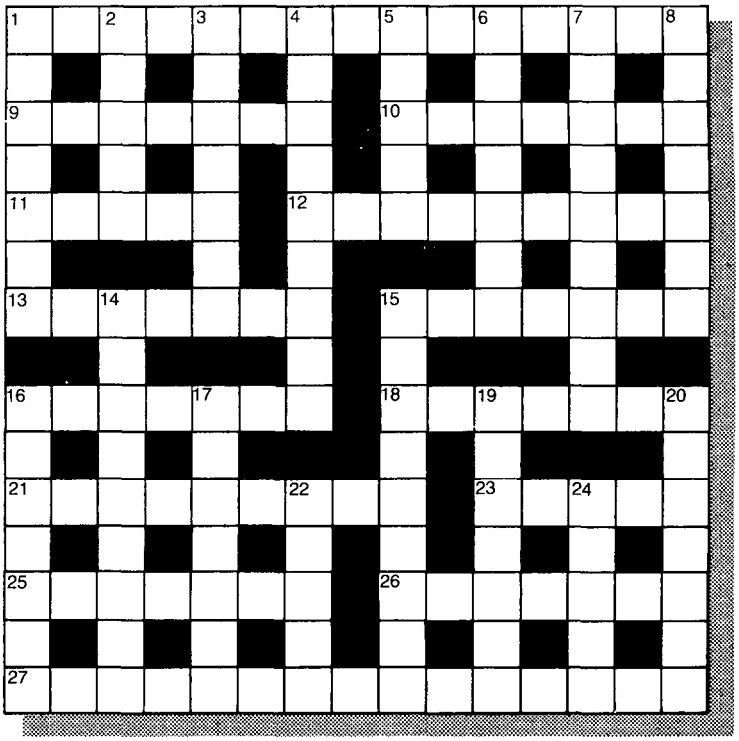
POLITICAL PUZZLE

by John Barclay

The numbers indicate the number of letters and words, e.g., (2, 3) means a two-letter word followed by a three-letter word. Groups of letters, e.g., USA, are treated as one word.



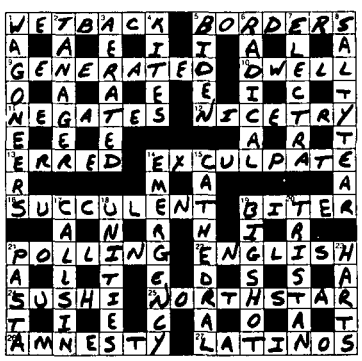
DOWN

1. Hep pair managed to become less sad. (7)
2. Fragment is tough after September 1. (5)
3. Plastered Air Force fed around nine. (7)
4. Radical right spread rail libel. (9)
5. We hear revenue raiser changes course. (5)
6. Pleasure from bringing up story before particle. (7)
7. Join cretin set somehow. (9)
8. Enlarge carefully assembly predecessor. (7)
14. Least substantial mixed ink in modified steins. (9)
15. Holding back Europe? (9)
16. Saint he sculpted carelessly. (2, 5)
17. Bill Bradley, for example, set up little railway vista. (3, 4)
19. Attorney General tread carefully to make distinctions. (7).
20. Quick answer is nothing with excited priest around. (7)
22. Excellent bins tossed around by playwright. (5)
24. Lady graduate makes queen's home. (5)

ACROSS

1. Scattered wardrobe for candidate in 27 Across. (3, 3, 2, 3, 4)
9. It is not serious to have Paul fly around. (7)
10. Discipline of pure nitrogen. (7)
11. Brief independent former guide. (5)
12. Fomenter sends top ego railroad to the queen. (9)
13. Tenant arouses red's ire. (7)
15. Put away defective lace after study. (7)
16. Start Latin II course. (7)
18. Mixed reagent invalidates theory. (7)
21. Heir in ivy famous for marriages. (5, 4)
23. Commentator emphasized in liberal's opinion. (5)
25. Clumsy Shah set dress styles. (7)
26. Fugitives serve awkwardly around year-end. (7)
27. Political start for nice green hatter in a way. (8, 3, 4)

Answers to last month's puzzle:



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MAKING McKINLEY SEXY

Gore Vidal's fiction is fun and accurate. Too bad his non-fiction is reckless and annoying.

by Steven Waldman

Say, did you know that President McKinley would casually drop a silk handkerchief over his wife's head during dinner parties when she had an epileptic seizure? Or that Theodore Roosevelt became vice president largely because the New York Republican boss wanted the pesky governor out of his state? Or that President McKinley prevented William Jennings Bryan from campaigning in 1898 by refusing to grant him a discharge from the Army? I must confess that the reason I love Gore Vidal's novels is that I share his appetite for historical morsels like these that appear in his latest, *Empire*.* His books are peppered with anecdotes that are as fun as they are revealing.

Really taking delight in *Empire*, or any historical novel, means having a certain faith in the author. In other genres, the author's credibility is of secondary importance. So what if the poet Ezra Pound spent the last years of his life in Washington's St. Elizabeths hospital for the mentally ill; it doesn't make his *Cantos* any less powerful. But when you pick up a historical novel you know it's a mix of fact and fiction; you hope the author will sort out the two and that the history will be largely accurate. If the author doesn't do that, the thrill is gone. The work becomes distracting, leaving one wondering what's real and what isn't. You lose the great strength of historical novels: the feeling that You Are There.

That's why Gore Vidal ought to shut up. He should skip the book tours, stop writing for popular magazines, and refuse interviews. Shortly before I began *Empire*, I made the mistake of picking up a *Washington Post* profile of Vidal in which he explained how the world is run by a cabal of bankers and publishers. He went on to call on the U.S. and the Soviet Union to unite economically as white people to fight what he's called the "grimly determined asiatics." I put the article down.

Up to that point I had carefully avoided reading his outrageous *Nation* article accusing Norman Podhoretz of retaining "first loyalty" to Israel instead of being an "assimilated American." That may be Vidal's idea of irony—his editor Victor Navasky says it was—but he is so reckless and so offensive so much of the time that you cannot easily discern wit from idiocy. In an essay for *Newsweek* on the Iran-contra scandal, Vidal not only excoriates Oliver North, but the entire Marine Corps. Add to this Vidal's notorious histrionics, like his squabbling with Norman Mailer and William F. Buckley, and you're pretty fed up. He's like some drunk who shows up mysteriously at your party, scarfs your cheese, drinks your booze, and keeps picking fights until you send him off in a cab.

Yet Vidal's novels are so well executed that you forget he's the same loon you just saw on "Dick Cavett." The great irony of Vidal's writing is that his fiction is more truthful than his non-fiction. Many outrageous lines in *Empire* turn out to be nearly exact quotes from the letters, diaries, and news accounts of the times. Remarkably, he even deals sensitively with anti-semitism, having one sympathetic character support Captain Dreyfus, the Jewish officer convicted of treason by the French government in 1894. Vidal's Henry Adams throws tantrums about the "refuse of the Mediterranean, the detritus of Mitteleuropa, and the Jews, the Jews. . . ." Sounds like Vidal.

We fact-checked several points in the book, including those opening anecdotes, and found that Vidal hadn't made anything up. That's important, especially for couch potatoes like me who have spent more time with *TV Guide* than with Richard Hofstadtar. For years, I assumed Abraham Lincoln was a naive pacifist because of one "Star Trek" episode in which the former president, allied with a great Vulcan hero against Genghis Kahn and some furry-faced alien, innocently blundered into the villains' trap. Moreover, after many viewings of "Citizen Kane" I was certain William Randolph Hearst's childhood sled led to the sinking of the *Maine*. And because of my frequent viewings of the

**Empire.* Gore Vidal. *Random House, $22.50.*

Steven Waldman is an editor of The Washington Monthly. *Peter Mooney provided research assistance for this article.*

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musical "1776," I became convinced that John Adams tricked Thomas Jefferson into writing the Declaration of Independence by making sure the Virginian had lots of sex.

Vidal's history is largely accurate, but it's not complete. He limits his work to the powerful, not dealing with how most citizens behaved or why. He is no Dickens. Although *Empire* takes place at the turn of the century, a traumatic period of mass immigration and industrialization, those forces are rarely mentioned. Vidal is the Hugh Sidey of novelists—chronicling the leaders, the presidents, the power brokers, and the wealthy.

Cloning a nose

Much of *Empire* is devoted to the presidencies of William McKinley and Theodore Roosevelt, a time when the U.S. flexed its industrial and military muscles from Cuba to the Philippines. Through the lens of two fictional characters, Caroline Sanford, a newspaper publisher, and her brother Blaise, who works for William Randolph Hearst, we watch the titans of the period struggle with themselves and the issues confronting an Empire.

Some of it is familiar turf: William Randolph Hearst's Yellow Journalism, Teddy Roosevelt's international ambitions. But if you're like me, you'll probably be most enlightened by Vidal's portrayal of William McKinley. Just about all I could remember of him was that he was assassinated by some anarchist (or was it a disappointed office seeker?) with a difficult-to-pronounce last name. I had no idea why he was so popular or how he behaved as president. Vidal's gift is that he breathes life into this non-descript, black-and-white-photo of a president. Vidal, of course, didn't know everything McKinley thought or said. But Vidal does what historical novelists have done since Herodotus, "the father of history." Based on what he does know, he devises a plausible interpretation. It's a little like the doctors in Woody Allen's "Sleeper" who attempted to clone an entire body from a single nose. Vidal takes facts and spins them into a fully formed body and personality.

His McKinley is a cross between Buddha and Boss Tweed—reserved and religious, but also a political animal. He opposes imperialism until he senses its popularity. While pondering the annexation of the Philippines he visits Omaha, Nebraska, stronghold of his Democratic opponent William Jennings Bryan:

" 'I'll beard him in his own town, and I'll persuade the folks to. . .' The president paused.

" 'To welcome the annexation of the Philippines?'

" 'I'll see what I find there first.' "

In the end, of course, he takes the Philippines—not with congressional authorization, but, with the approval of a higher authority. "I think God answered me the other night," he said. After explaining to God the various policy options:

> God answered me. I heard myself saying, aloud: Number four, in the light of numbers one through three, as I have just demonstrated, Your Honor—God, that is—we have no choice but to take all the islands and govern the people to the best of our ability, to educate and civilize them and to Christianize them—and in my sudden certitude, I knew that God was speaking to and through me, and that we would all of us do our best by them, or our fellow men for whom Christ also died.

That passage sounds like Vidal-the-Crank ascribing the fate of nations to insomniac ramblings. In fact, it's Vidal-the-Scholar; McKinley's actual words were very similar. Instead of skipping past tidbits like these, Vidal underlines them, reiterating a great truth about history: it unfolds not according to the careful reasoning of statesmen but through the deeds of teeth-clicking egotists like Roosevelt and religiously political (or politically religious) men like McKinley. This goes for Hearst, too. For him, the real battle is not to extend democracy across the globe, but to use the war to beat Joseph Pulitzer's *New York World*.

Vidal, though, is not so blinded by cynicism as to provide a large cast of anti-imperialist characters; that would leave the impression that substantial numbers of Americans protested our overseas conquests. Few did. Sadly, most Americans agreed with Roosevelt, who quips here, "We can do them only good. They can do themselves only harm."

Hearst as assassin

Even in a book about empire, Vidal devotes much attention to the role of history and storytelling in our lives. Much is made of the Perdicaris incident, so memorably portrayed in "The Wind and the Lion," starring Sean Connery, Brian Keith, and Candice Bergen. In 1904, a Moroccan bandit named Raisuli abducted Ion H. Perdicaris, the son of a South Carolinian lady and a Greek. Roosevelt threatened Morocco with

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war unless they released the American. In *Empire*, Secretary of State John Hay, with some satisfaction, reports to Roosevelt that his staff has discovered Perdicaris is not an American citizen, so there is no need to send in the troops. Roosevelt, panicking about the upcoming Republican convention, is apoplectic: "This ruins everything. Everything! I had counted on a powerful telegram to wake up the convention, the country, the world, to the fact that no American citizen anywhere on earth can be harmed without a bloody reprisal and now some fool clerk in your office comes up with this. . .this nonsense! No!" (Most of the exclamation points in the book are used up in Roosevelt diatribes.) Under Roosevelt's orders, Hay sends off a telegram: "Perdicaris alive or Raisuli dead." The Republican convention is suitably awakened.

If it seems farfetched that elections might be steered by lies, remember the "Canuck Letter" that did in Edmund Muskie's 1972 presidential campaign. Vidal shows how disinformation and exaggerations can change history every bit as effectively as fact.

This is well understood by Vidal's Hearst, who is obsessed with changing history, not just publishing it. "What Hearst arbitrarily decided was news was news; and the powerful few were obliged to respond to his inventions." Throughout *Empire* Hearst struggles to be a protagonist, not just a storyteller. His ambitions are relentless. He gobbles newspapers around the country in part to build a political base; he buys letters hinting that Standard Oil influenced Hearst's enemy Teddy Roosevelt; he cuts deals with Tammany Hall in New York, after having railed against it for years.

Hearst is elected to Congress, makes a strong run for the Democratic presidential nomination, and almost wins the governorship of New York. But the Yellow Journalism that propels him ultimately topples him.

Fearing Hearst, Roosevelt dispatches Elihu Root, his secretary of war, to New York shortly before the gubernatorial election. Before the New York media, Root blames Hearst's Yellow Journalism for McKinley's death, repeating the infamous quatrain penned by Ambrose Bierce, a Hearst-employed journalist, before McKinley's assassination. After a Kentucky governor had been killed, Bierce had written:

> The bullet that pierced Goebel's breast
> Cannot be found in all the west;
> Good reason, it is speeding here
> To stretch McKinley on his bier.

"So it was on the charge of regicide that Hearst was to be brought down at last. Blaise marveled at the exactness with which Roosevelt, using Root for knife, struck the lethal blow."

The screeching owl

As Vidal explores shabby journalism, he also uses it as an elegant literary device. Historical novelists must explain the forces of history without disrupting the narrative flow, but that's difficult to pull off. Since both Blaise and Caroline Sanford are journalists, they have an excuse to be recording historical events and asking questions. Roosevelt's strategy for gaining the vice presidential nomination becomes clear because Blaise Sanford, trying to cover the 1904 convention, asks a veteran political reporter to explain what's going on. He explains that, to help Roosevelt, the New York delegation voted against him so he wouldn't be seen as a pawn of the state bosses.

Occasionally, Blaise and Caroline come perilously close to tripping over the historical furniture. As they become increasingly important in the lives of the real people, it starts to feel like one of those science fiction movies in which time-travelling adventurers alter the course of history by stepping in front of assassins' bullets. Caroline, for example, contemplates publishing the letters in her newspaper accusing many politicians, including Roosevelt, of being in the pockets of Standard Oil. And Blaise is a top aide to Hearst throughout most of the book. But Vidal usually stops them just before they derail history. Hearst, for instance, tends not to listen to Blaise. Ultimately Blaise and Caroline have the same effect Walter Cronkite did when he interviewed some warrior in the middle of a Napoleonic battle during the "You Are There" shows: they are recognized by the greats of history but don't affect their actions.

Vidal's treatment of Teddy Roosevelt is less skilled. Roosevelt is rendered a near-hysterical hypocrite, a "screeching owl," who rants about reform but does little. "Roosevelt suddenly began to click his teeth rapidly, alarmingly; he was like a machine, thought Blaise, wondering how on earth he could describe, in mere words, so odd a creature." There is historical evidence for most of those contentions, but that's just one side of Roosevelt. The brave, determined Theodore Roosevelt of David McCullough's *Mornings on Horseback* or the progressive of John Morton Blum's *The Republican Roosevelt* is ignored. It's fine to have a particular historical interpretation; historians do it all the time. But Vidal also fails

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to show the qualities that, for better or worse, got Roosevelt very far, very fast.

Despite its occasional misses, I can't help but think that *Empire* would be as good a read in the classroom as it is on the beach. Schools do teach historical fiction, often assigning Shakespeare's *Henry IV*, for example. But they are taught as literature, not history. Vidal's novels are certainly more interesting than the history textbooks I read in high school, and they do a better job of unraveling history as well. As for the danger of poisoning innocent minds with falsehoods, the very process of separating fact from fiction could be part of the assignment, an exercise a good deal more stimulating than memorizing dates.

Even the exercise of distinguishing fact from interpretation could be fruitful, forcing students not just to determine whether Roosevelt took the nomination on the first ballot but also whether he should be considered a progressive or a scoundrel. Most high schools teach history as an agreed-upon set of facts. Through Vidal, students could confront different views of the world. Oscar Handlin, a Harvard historian, wrote in *Truth in History* that Vidal's *Burr* was simply a "poisonous portrayal of the early Republic in a fantastic tale of corruption, greed and sex." Other historians, such as Lawrence Goodwyn of Duke, call Vidal "our best chronicler of power." Students could join the fray. It would be fun and educational—as long as you keep the kids out of his *Nation* articles. ■

SEX AND DRUGS AND HEIDEGGER

Allan Bloom picks the wrong enemies, the right solution, and gives up hope too soon

by Jacob Weisberg

One night before my recent graduation from college I was standing in the library with some classmates, talking about our final papers. One friend explained that she was writing an essay comparing *Outrageous Fortune* to *Desperately Seeking Susan* for a popular lecture course called "Women and Film." Another said she was on her way home to finish a paper on Max Headroom. I can't honestly say anyone was writing about Homer, Plato, Aristotle, Shakespeare, Cervantes, or Kant.

How did this state of affairs come about? How was the traditional concept of liberal education supplanted by the anything-goes attitude of today's academy? Allan Bloom tries to explain what has happened.* And as hyperbolic, mean-spirited, and fuddy-duddyish as he occasionally sounds, his book is an essentially sound analysis of the mess our universities are in and the consequences for our country. Yet Bloom errs by blaming all our intellectual woes on the potent messages of Neitzsche, Heidegger, and Mick Jagger, rather than providing sound histories of what actually happened to colleges. Just as important, he assumes our disease has advanced beyond hope of a cure. Higher education is indeed in a state, but as the enormous sales of Bloom's book—a number one bestseller—testify, a consensus for necessary reform is already in the making.

Bloom begins with the argument that the classics are the best materials for grappling with the eternal questions. He thinks that those authors generally accepted as "great" have survived because of their success at forcing generations of readers to think about the permanent issues, questions like: How should I lead my life? What is the best kind of government? The universities' purpose, he argues, is not to train biologists, or help us compete with the Japanese, but to enable the young to enter into dialogue with the great minds of the tradition.

To Bloom, universities are in a state of crisis because they have abandoned this mission, considering it naive, even misguided. Their retreat has had disastrous consequences for college students and the nation, as indicated by Bloom's mouthful of a subtitle: *How Higher Education Has Failed Democracy and Impoverished the Souls of Today's Students.* As for democracy, today's universities have reduced it to an unthinking prejudice. Without taking seriously either the ideas upon which our government is founded or the undemocratic alternatives, students cannot really believe in the justice of their system.

**The Closing of the American Mind.* Allan Bloom. *Simon & Schuster, $18.95.*

Jacob Weisberg is an intern in Newsweek*'s Washington bureau.*

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Bloom does not suggest that we have given up reading the great works of our tradition altogether. But we read them less, and in the wrong way. The supermarket approach to higher education has assured that the classics comprise an ever-diminishing part of college experience. "And there is no official guidance, no university-wide agreement, about what he should study," Bloom writes. Most universities insist upon only lame "distributional requirements," in which students sample the sciences, social sciences, and humanities. Bloom recognizes that early specialization assures a head start on a career, but denies that the jump is worth the cost. A student who chooses chemistry as a freshman misses "the charmed years when he can, if he chooses, become anything he wishes," as he puts it. In America, college is "civilization's only chance to get to him."

Fist-waving radicals

Why does Bloom think our universities stopped asking about the good life? Not surprisingly, he sees the transformation taking place solely in the realm of ideas. Bloom sketches the decline in an intellectual history of education that begins with Socrates, hops to Hobbes, and rambles around Rousseau before coming to a dead halt at Heidegger—all in the course of a single chapter. According to his version, higher education had its heyday in Hegel's Germany during the early 1800s. Soon thereafter, the notion of liberal arts caught on in the United States. Then trouble began brewing on the continent. Nietzsche and Heidegger signaled rationalism's demise. Bloom's emblem is the Rektoratsrede, the pro-fascist speech Heidegger gave upon ascending to the rectorship of the University of Freiburg in 1933. As usual, America was 30 years behind the curve. "As Hegel was said to have died in Germany in 1933, Enlightenment in America came close to breathing its last during the sixties," Bloom writes.

He takes the parallel quite seriously. At Cornell, where Bloom taught at the time, administration and faculty capitulated to the demands of radical students in the face of threats, intimidation, and violence. Student revolutionaries waved guns, took professors hostage and threatened their lives. But rather than expel the offenders, the craven Cornell administration agreed to fire an unpopular professor and abolish rules. "These students discerned that their teachers did not really believe that freedom of thought was necessarily a good thing, that they suspected all this was ideology protecting the injustices of our 'system,' and that they could be pressured into benevolence toward violent attempts to change the ideology." The intimidation and violence tapered off at Cornell, but the university continued to respond by destroying itself, removing requirements and acceding to demands for "relevance." In serving social goals like integration, the university lost sight of its true purpose and relinquished any vision of what an educated person should know.

Bloom hasn't quite sorted out the sixties; he still thinks of the decade as a synonym for rot. Apparently his experience at Cornell was so awful that he cannot distinguish valid demands for relevance from what was immoral, infantile, and destructive about student radicalism. The country was, after all, at war, and the struggle for civil rights was not yet won. Decent people found it impossible to shut the blinds, plug their ears, and read St. Thomas Aquinas. Yet this seems to be Bloom's recommendation for troubled times. Had he been at the University of Freiburg in 1933, I imagine Bloom would have tried to find a quiet library, safe from the clamor of the Nazis and their opponents.

The kind of irrelevant university Bloom recommends does in fact exist. Although he does not mention it, St. John's College in Annapolis and Santa Fe embodies most of his preferences. Its curriculum consists of a chronological reading and discussion of the great books, conducted with undeniable rigor. Several years ago, when I was choosing a college, I visited St. John's Annapolis campus for a few days. I chose not to attend for the reason I imagine Bloom does not teach there. The attitude that permeates the campus is "in the world but not of it." There are no school newspapers or nerdy student government leaders. No football team and no political activism. Students lead contemplative lives, which they fail to integrate with their active ones.

Bloom ought to realize that a school like St. John's College eliminates the right sort of relevance along with the wrong kind. Higher education must be preoccupied with the meaning of books for life, with the actual consequences of ideas. If you agree with Locke about natural rights you must act accordingly, not just ultimately, but tomorrow. Elsewhere Bloom seems to recognize this, but when he hears the buzzword "relevance," he sees fist-waving radicals and stops making distinctions. As a connoisseur of higher learning, I expect he does understand that the greatest teachers are those able to tap the contemporary significance of a classic text without slighting its historical meaning.

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For a book about the "American Mind," Bloom says little about how higher education was actually transformed in the United States. He does not sully his account of Nietzsche and Heidegger with an explanation of how their ideas trickled down into practice. Certainly Nietzsche's writings did signify the end of rationalism in some ultimate sense, but how did *Beyond Good and Evil* bring us Native American Literature, one of the courses Amy Carter recently flunked at Brown?

What's even less convincing is Bloom's opinion that this philosophical evolution has caused a fundamental change in students. Before the revolution, "students were better, more highly motivated." They studied languages, their lives were shaped by important books, and they had heroes. He has conveniently forgotten the rocket scientists who gobbled goldfish and sat on telephone poles through their college years. No, students back then burned to know. Today, students have "lost the practice of and the taste for reading." In what is perhaps the ultimate overgeneralization in a book not given to understatement, he says they are "in general nice" but without passion, and have become too self-centered for deep love or genuine friendship.

For this he blames Mick Jagger. Bloom doesn't see rock music as an epiphenomenon but a root cause of our malaise. "I believe it ruins the imagination of young people and makes it very difficult for them to have a passionate relationship to the art and thought that are the substance of liberal education," he argues. Because it induces premature ecstasy, the big beat makes it impossible for its initiates to hear the quieter harmonies of Shakespeare. "As long as they have the Walkman on, they cannot hear what the great tradition has to say," Bloom writes. "And, after its prolonged use, when they take it off, they find they are deaf." Rock music is closely allied with drugs, which Bloom refreshingly opposes not for moral reasons, but because they make it impossible for students to get excited about books, which provide less intense stimulation.

There is something to his analysis. When no more serious stimulation is available, kids do tend to apply their imaginations and intelligence to whatever is within easy reach—rock, TV, sports, what have you. But bright students almost always put these adolescent fascinations in better perspective when something better is laid at their doorstep. Like most of my male friends, I wasted inordinate amounts of time listening to bands and analyzing rock lyrics. But I don't anymore. Now I waste inordinate amounts of time watching "The McLaughlin Group" and reading the Style section of *The Washington Post*, but I doubt any permanent damage was done by those lengthy analyses of Boomtown Rats lyrics. Pop tunes may diminish attention spans, but Bloom's portrait of glazy-eyed metalheads who can't focus their eyes on a printed page is a caricature worthy of a Tipper Gore.

Early sexual experience, he supposes, has a similar dulling effect. Having already lost their virginity, many teenagers have seen it all. Worldliness stunts their intellectual and emotional growth. The "erotic" element, the sense of universal mystery that drives students to learn, is missing from their lives. Thus they lack the inclination to ask profound questions. "They may become competent specialists, but they are flat-souled," Bloom writes. Again, it's refreshing that Allan Bloom isn't a moralist. But all that from intercourse too early? Whatever happened to just going blind? Although there are plenty of good reasons why adolescents shouldn't have sex, I don't think that distracting them from reading is one of them.

When he compares students then and now, Bloom gets confused about the makeup of his sample. At times he sounds as if he is writing about all institutions of higher education, not just our "20 or 30 best universities," as he claims. At the University of Chicago, where Bloom studied and where he now teaches, the average freshman may or may not be as intellectually curious as his counterpart 30 years ago. But a case could be made that standards have risen at top universities, which once weighed wealth and family heavily in their admission decisions and are now attempting to be more meritocratic. Bloom should be appalled at the Yale and Princeton of 50 years ago, where students accepted "gentleman Cs" and spent the semester skiing.

Instead of following one institution over a period of years, Bloom offers generalized snapshots of before and after. In the forties, when he was a student at the University of Chicago, ideas were taken seriously. Beside this picture we have the debased, unnamed university of today, where relativism reigns supreme. Bloom calls the University of Chicago in the forties "a great university at one of its greatest moments." Under the leadership of Robert Maynard Hutchins, Chicago was guided by Bloom's vision of higher education. Yet he uses it as a yardstick to measure all other institutions of higher learning. I am not saying that our standards shouldn't be higher. But we shouldn't fool ourselves into thinking that

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University of Chicago's shining moment was typical of what universities were like before the sixties.

Bloom's argument about education failing democracy is somewhat more complicated. In democracies, it is the majority and not a powerful elite that threatens to tyrannize the life of the mind. Even though our society accepts the principle of freedom of expression, the dominance of public opinion in America tends to constrict the range of ideas, censoring them in a way comparable to authoritarian suppression.

Because of this tendency, democratic societies have a special need for enclaves where the free play of ideas can continue unhampered by public prejudice. Thus America needs universities, where anything not only can be said, but is. "The universities never performed this function very well," Bloom admits. "Now they have practically ceased trying." In attempting to serve a myriad of social goals, like integrating the races, abolishing sexism, and teaching professions, the colleges, he argues, became mirrors of the larger society, rather than oases from it. Bloom likes it when the university inculcates a belief in democracy, but he objects to its promoting specific democratic values, like racial equality.

His assertion that higher education fosters disbelief in liberal democracy does not stand up. If nothing else survives, one sees a firm insistence on pluralism and free expression among today's students. When a Yale student was disciplined for putting up an anti-homosexual poster last year, most students were dismayed at his views but outraged that he should be prevented from expressing them. Student pressure helped to overturn his conviction. Bloom ought to see this kind of incident as a sign of democratic health.

Where he does have allies, Bloom curiously ignores them. Chicago still retains a commitment to the great books and recently voted to make its requirements even tougher. Nor does he mention Columbia, which would seem to exemplify the curriculum and approach he prefers. I am not sure why he ignores this counterexample. Like many neoconservatives, he seems to prefer posing as a besieged underdog even when he's winning.

These bastions of great books are in fact the exceptions that prove the rule. My alma mater, Yale, is fairly typical. Despite the recently departed A. Bartlett Giamatti's ear-bending platitudes about the liberal arts, Yale retains only a vestigial distributional requirement and allows students to take courses on a pass-fail basis. Although it recently instituted a foreign language requirement, Yale does not require the study of great books. There exists, however, the option to study them in a year-long course called Directed Studies. This sort of alternative is common, comparable to the honors program at the University of Michigan, and the Freshman Integrated Program at Wesleyan. At Yale, less than 10 percent of the student body participates in Directed Studies.

At minimum, a Directed Studies-type program ought to be required for all freshmen. But like most schools, Yale is unwilling to declare that the great books constitute the foundation stones of higher learning. The university refuses to tell students that Plato is more essential than linguistics, which Amy Carter also flunked at Brown. In so doing, it abdicates its central responsibility. Bloom articulates this simple point forcefully.

Despite a lot of noise about bringing back rigor, there is little sign of improvement. Many of the highly touted "new requirements," are in fields like "gender studies," and "technology," instead of literature, history, and philosophy. Bloom is skeptical too of the sort of bromides offered by Secretary of Education William Bennett. "Now, it may be possible, with a lot of effort and political struggle to return to earlier standards of accomplishment in the three R's, but it will not be so easy to recover the knowledge of philosophy, history, and literature that was trashed," he writes. "Calming the universities down, stopping grade inflation, making students study, all of that may be salutary, but it does not go to the heart of the matter. There is much less in the university to study now." Bloom doesn't think we can undo what Nietzsche, Heidegger, and the sixties did to the university.

Like the neoconservatives whose company he keeps, Bloom seems contemptuous of any more realistic analysis of our trouble. He succumbs to the easy lure of locating the problems in the exclusive realm of ideology. This prompts him to depict our plight as beyond any remedy other than a national reversion to an earlier way of thinking. But there are many more mundane explanations for why our universities are stuck in a rut. "One cannot and should not hope for a general reform," Bloom writes. But why not? The biggest obstacles to curricular rehabilitation are merely bureaucratic. Imposing as those may be they don't require us to reverse the course of intellectual history.

The enemies are the tenure system and the power of university departments. Tenure has so many faults, it's hard to know where to begin. But most important, it denigrates teaching in

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favor of specialized research. Junior faculty members don't become full professors by giving inspiring lectures or preparing for seminars in the great books. As all know well, their time is more wisely spent researching monographs and scholarly articles that will make the case that they are leaders in their fields. Once teachers receive tenure, competitive pressures evaporate; they don't have to teach or publish. Although students generally like great books programs, tenured faculty avoid them like the plague. They lack prestige, and require a great deal of preparation that doesn't double as research for a teacher's next monograph.

The increase in the number of college departments is equally pernicious. At most schools, the number of accredited fields of knowledge has doubled or tripled over the past 50 years. Some of these disciplines have more merit than others. But under the present arrangement, every newly ratified academic field is born with a lobbyist attached at the hip. The department protects the subject's full equality. If a university allows one of its teachers to offer a spurious course like "Feminist Frameworks" —another Amy Carter near-miss—it can be abolished with great effort. But if the school recognizes it as a major or department—Women's Studies—with an office and staff, forget ever getting rid of it. Since the rising power of departments has coincided with a decline in the power of university presidents, no one is in a position to refuse citizenship to the new subjects banging on the door. The entire framework bears remarkable similarities to party politics, in which pressure groups representing special interests undermine the public good. In academia the public interest being overridden is that of the students.

Statesmanship at today's university means arbitrating between essential and inessential. We need deans and presidents with the courage (and power) to abolish the journalism majors, decertify the semiotics departments, and find some better use for the film studies centers. None of this will be easy. But there is no reason why we shouldn't retrace our steps. Bloom is right that the great books are still the best way to examine our lives. Why not just get back to them? ■

MANILA FUDGE

How the U.S. tries to have it both ways in the Philippines

by James Fallows

These two books* are about two different countries. William Chapman is mainly concerned with economic and social problems in the Philippines; Raymond Bonner with policy-making in the United States. Both books are valuable and well worth reading—and, I should make clear, both authors are friends of mine. Chapman's book probably tells us more about the future problems we're likely to face in the Philippines. The contrast between his approach and Bonner's helps answer the question around which Bonner builds his book: Why does America so often end up embracing the Somozas, Duvaliers, and Marcoses of the world, the thugs and dictators who mistreat their people while they're in power and embarrass us for our complicity when they are finally overthrown?

James Fallows is a contributing editor of The Washington Monthly, *and has reported for the* Atlantic *from Asia since early last year.*

**Waltzing With a Dictator: The Marcoses and the Making of Foreign Policy.* Raymond Bonner. *Times Books, $19.95.*
**Inside the Philippine Revolution.* William Chapman. *Norton, $18.95.*

To call Bonner's book a polemic is not to insult it. Bonner has a case to make—that Ferdinand and Imelda Marcos were corrupt and wicked, and that until nearly the last minute the U.S. tolerated and even encouraged them, thereby putting ourselves on the wrong side of history and making Filipinos who hated Marcos hate us. He lays out the evidence as relentlessly as a prosecutor working to bring in a guilty verdict.

Obviously he has a lot of raw material to work with. His case is summed up by the pictures in his book; they show Nixon, Kissinger, Reagan, Mondale, Bush, Weinberger, and so forth, most of them decked out and ridiculous-looking in "barong tagalog," the Philippine national shirt, and all of them fawning over Imelda or toasting Ferdinand. (The picture section is valuable in another way. Philippine accounts of the Marcoses's rise invariably dwell on Imelda's "beauty" as a crucial ingredient. I've studied pictures of even the sleek young Imelda and have never understood what all the excitement was about. But one picture in this collection, taken in 1965 when Marcos was campaigning for his first term

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as president, shows Imelda smiling lewdly at onlookers like a Manila bar-girl. The woman in this picture could have gotten Lyndon Johnson's attention—as Bonner says she did. Nothing Hart-like came of the encounter between them, but through the sixties and seventies Imelda was serenely confident that she could wrap Yankee statesmen around her finger.)

The episodes Bonner describes flesh out the relationship shown in the photos. William Byroade, the U.S. ambassador when Marcos declared martial law in 1972, heard about the plans in advance, Bonner says, and raised no objection at all. Walter Mondale went ahead with a visit to the Philippines, despite clear warnings that Filipinos would see it as an endorsement of Marcos when martial law was still in force, when the human-rights record was getting worse, and when corruption under the "conjugal dictatorship" was moving into high gear. George Bush told Marcos that Americans loved and admired him for his "adherence to democratic principles and to the democratic process." And of course Ronald Reagan made his idiotic "there's been cheating on both sides" remark while Marcos was trying to steal the election from Corizon Aquino in 1986.

Bonner alternates between document-based analysis—he has extracted a prodigious number of internal memos through the Freedom of Information Act—and Halberstamesque short biographies to amplify and dramatize his points. From each successive American administration, he selects key figures to depict. Bonner gives us Richard Holbrooke and Patricia Derian fighting for the Carter administration's soul. He gives us Michael Armacost switching from chumminess with Marcos, when Armacost was the U.S. ambassador in Manila in the early Reagan years, to a gradual effort to remove him when he came back to the number-three position in the State Department.

As a journalistic device, the use of profiles is a success—this long, heavily detailed book is vivid and fast-moving—but the biographies themselves sometimes seem polemicized. From what Bonner says about each player's appearance, personal bearing, and motivations, it's often easy to guess whether he approves or disapproves of the official's policy.

The most heartfelt writing in the book concerns the Carter administration. Derian, the assistant secretary of state for human rights, keeps pushing the administration to scold or punish Marcos as he settles deeper into despotism. Holbrooke, the assistant secretary for East Asian

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affairs, wants business as usual, arguing that Marcos's pro-American foreign policy and (above all) his approval of U.S. military bases in the Philippines mattered more than anything else. Bonner obviously sides with Derian, and his picture of Holbrooke is ugly enough that Holbrooke will have to deal with it somehow if he is looking for a bigger foreign-policy job in the next Democratic administration. (Bonner claims that Holbrooke fought unfairly, squashing or exiling anyone who disagreed with him, and that by pandering to Marcos he made life worse for millions in the Philippines.)

The significance of the Carter chapters, apart from their intrinsic soap-opera value, is what they say about expectations. Bonner seems more anguished by Carter's failure to rein in Marcos than about Reagan's unthinking approval of whatever Marcos wanted to do. Carter, after all, was supposed to care about human rights.

A similiar belief—that groups with higher moral goals should be held to higher standards—explains the passion of the book as a whole. Bonner, who in his pre-journalistic life had been a marine officer in Vietnam, a Nader's Raider, and a public interest lawyer, is an idealist. As such he is anguished by America's failure to live up to its idealistic claims.

This part of his argument is very compelling. How *could* George Bush say that we loved Marcos for his democratic beliefs? But Bonner, like many other idealists, goes on to suggest that doing the morally right thing also makes good practical sense. In life that's often true, but sometimes it isn't—Christian martyrs eventually converted the Roman empire, but for a long time they just got devoured by lions. If it had taken a different, more idealistic policy toward Marcos, the U.S. would have a cleaner conscience now. It's not so convincing that things would be any different in the Philippines. The United States is shamed when it doesn't stand up for the things it believes in: no torture, fair elections, refraining from looting the public treasury. But Bonner's practical-minded argument is harder to prove—or, for me, to believe.

"One is left to speculate what might have happened if the United States had done something other than roll over when martial law was declared," Bonner says in a footnote that is actually an important part of his argument. "While it might or might not have deterred Marcos from his course, many Filipinos, as well as American officials, believe that a voice of concern from Washington would have encouraged expressions of opposition in Manila. . . . Even if a U.S. protest might not have had any immediate impact, 'if we had come down harder at the beginning,' a senior CIA officer who spent many years on Philippine affairs suggested in 1985, a decade later 'we wouldn't have been faced with "Down with the U.S.-Marcos dictatorship." ' Moreover, he added, 'We may have been able to have speeded up the restoration of democracy.' "

Maybe, maybe not. As it was, democracy restored itself quite quickly after the Marcoses' departure—Filipinos have been voting practically non-stop since last spring. And the anti-Americanism in the country (offset by the very broad pro-American feelings) may be somewhat worse because of our support for the Marcoses, but it reflects scores of other factors that predate and surpass martial law or the Marcoses themselves. They arise from, among other things, the Philippines' long years as a colony, its long-standing economic dependence, and its peoples' desire to become Americans but simultaneously to be respected as Filipinos. So Bonner is probably right in saying that America's past toadying to Marcos makes trouble for America now. Whether it makes *much* difference, when compared to all the other factors, is not so clear.

It's even harder to be sure that a high road human rights policy would have made a major difference in the Philippines. Yes, American pressure was decisive at the very end, when shoves from Paul Laxalt and others pushed Marcos over the cliff. But Filipinos, not Americans, created the conditions that drove him out.

More important, the Philippines' gravest problem—the profound unfairness of its few-very-rich and masses-very-poor economy—is simply beyond America's ability to control. The U.S. may have aggravated the problem—for instance, by not breaking up the big estates through land reform, as we did in Japan at the end of World War II. Land reform has helped Japan; its absence is one of the many forces hobbling the Philippines. But Japan was a conquered enemy that we could order around as we wished. At just the same time, the Philippines was being set up as a proud, independent country, supposed to make its own decisions. The U.S. didn't create the Philippines land system or its poverty, and we can't at the moment solve either directly. (Our biggest contribution toward Philippine prosperity is propably to absorb immigrants.) If Corazon Aquino, an enormously popular president and a perfectly pedigreed member of the upper class, can't convince her fellow rich hacienda-owners to share their land, how is some American sup-

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posed to do the job?

This is one of several depressing implications of William Chapman's fascinating book, which covers more topics than I can do justice to here. Chapman, who was *The Washington Post*'s bureau chief in Tokyo in the late seventies, has written a reportorial rather than argumentative book. It covers the history of Philippine communist and guerrilla movements, the doctrinal struggles within today's movement, its military strategy, and its behavior in the parts of the Philippines it already controls. Chapman emphasizes how severely the guerrillas are hindered by a shortage of weapons—he says that their expansion mainly depends on how many rifles they can steal from ambushed soldiers. He also shows, through biographies and interviews, that most of the leaders are theoretically-oriented Marxists, who look down on peasants who join the movement "just" because soldiers killed one of their relatives or plundered their village. He does not directly address the argument, made by Ross Munro, that the New People's Army would behave like the Khmer Rouge if it seized power, but he describes an NPA-controlled area where commandants mete out summary justice with guns. (But on the whole, Chapman says, peasants now perceive the NPA as being fairer and less rapacious than the regular Philippine army or the police force. This perception is the communists's greatest organizing tool.) Chapman interviewed a dissident priest who was active in the "Basic Christian Community" movement, dedicated to organizing the poor. "I asked whether he personally was troubled by the act of taking human life: 'I accept it and support it. And so does almost everyone else in our movement.' "

Chapman's emphasis on the old, deep grievances in the Philippines, which no government there (or here) has done much to solve, brings us back to Bonner's original question. Why *have* we consorted with so many unsavory governments, in the Philippines and elsewhere? Sheer bad judgment is sometimes the explanation—remember "cheating on both sides"—but the problem goes far deeper. Since the end of World War II, the U.S. has assumed a role it had never played: a world-wide military power, devoted to keeping its alliances in good repair. Forget the pressures, decisions, and forces of history that put us in this role; consider instead its consequences. In the past few years we've become more and more aware of the economic costs of running our post-war empire: we spend money and talent on weapons, while the Japanese and (to a lesser degree) the Europeans take a free ride. The Philippines reminds us that there is a spiritual and political cost too.

We have to pay the cost because the world is full of governments whose practices we don't approve of but whose cooperation we think we need. American presidents didn't have to go goofy over Imelda Marcos, but they still thought a world-girdling American navy needed its base at Subic Bay. They could have told themselves that eventually Marcos might be overthrown and that America would look better a generation from now for having opposed him all along. But in the meantime, Marcos was the leader of his country, in a position to make decisions and affect our welfare for years and years. The Swedes can afford to make prissy stands of principle about human rights, because they can offend nearly any non-Arab country they please. The U.S. could take a more Swedish approach—tilting toward Derian rather than Holbrooke, putting out a blistering human rights report every week—but it can't escape the bind created by our post-war role. I am *not* arguing against a more vigorous human-rights policy; far from it. It would be better for our morale, and it might, as Bonner says, make us seem somewhat less culpable when "our" dictators are overthrown. My point is that, even with a vigorous policy, dictators will remain—and unless we radically change our foreign commitments, we will have to cozy up to some of them. Does anyone imagine that Saudi Arabia is such a model of good-government? It isn't, but as long as we need oil we need its cooperation. We're lucky not to need oil as badly as the Japanese or Europeans, who therefore cuddle up to Libya.

Yes, some people think there are simple ways out. The unmodulated anti-communism of the fifties led us to believe that any enemy of our enemy was our friend (instead of just being the enemy of our enemy, and maybe our enemy too). Jeane Kirkpatrick revived essentially the same outlook in the early Reagan years. Another simple approach, more tempting in the Philippines' case, is to decide that the spiritual cost is not worth the strategic benefit, and to clear out. We can be powerful, or pure of heart, but not both. If we don't take either of these two approaches, we can't escape internal conflicts in our policy, and we are left with imperfect solutions like those of the Carter human-rights policy. This is one of the drawbacks of running an empire; and if we feel bad enough about waltzing with tyrants we may have to leave the dance floor. ■

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POLITICAL BOOKNOTES

The Brutality of Nations. Dan Jacobs. *Knopf, $22.95.* In this era of instant history, when one calamity erases the memory of another and tragedies like the Ethiopian famine are already being forgotten, it would seem quixotic to write about the famine in Biafra, which occurred almost 20 years ago. Yet this is relevant. The same malevolent forces that prevented food from reaching the children of Biafra in 1969 were also at work preventing food from reaching the children of northern Ethiopia in 1984. And from what we know so far, the record in Mozambique will be no different.

Jacobs, a speechwriter, political analyst, and United Nations consultant, has a liberal's sense of moral outrage but, thankfully, doesn't wear his heart on his sleeve. He knows that individual men are rarely evil, but when they are part of a bureaucratic framework, they often end up doing evil things. The bad guys in this book are precisely the ones who are most loyal to the narrowly defined needs of the institutions they served be it the U.N., the State Department, the British Foreign Office, the Canadian government, or the International Committee of the Red Cross. The good guys are often those with the least amount of institutional loyalty. That's why, according to this insider's story—Jacobs was a U.N. press officer at the time of the Biafra crisis—men like Richard Nixon and Henry Kissinger come out of this whole affair looking much better than such lofty personalities as U Thant, Pierre Trudeau, Harold Wilson, and Elliot Richardson.

All these institutions had a vested interest in good relations with Nigeria, a nation that was on the brink of an oil bonanza promising jobs and contracts for many western companies, particularly British ones, with colonial links to draw on. Diplomatically, too, Nigeria was a big fish; the most populous nation in Black Africa and a power in the then-emerging Third World majority at the U.N. On the other hand, Biafra, the break-away province of Nigeria's industrious Ibo tribe, had no such leverage. It had no U.N. lobby. It wasn't even a member of the U.N. It had few friends among the area experts at the State Department and Whitehall. So when Nigeria employed starvation as a weapon of war, the international community—as represented by these institutions—basically collaborated. The British Labor government even pumped arms into Lagos, rationalizing that a quick Nigerian victory would be followed by an opening of the air and land routes into Biafra, thus allowing food to flow in.

While the Nigerian military shot down relief planes and carried out mass executions of Biafran civilians, Canadian Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau, U.N. Secretary General U Thant, and Under Secretary of State Elliot Richardson were urging the Biafran authorities to cooperate more with international relief efforts, while saying nothing about the atrocities committed by Nigerian government troops. Though the Nixon White House, with Kissinger's approval, supported a more straightforward, "humanitarian" approach, according to the author, Richardson was swayed by the "hard political line" of State's Africa Bureau. As for the British Labor government, Wilson, in a private meeting, reportedly "remarked that if a million Ibos had to die to preserve the unity of Nigeria, well, that was not too high a price to pay." (That's more or less what it took.)

The Soviets were no angels either. Whenever Wilson seemed to be wavering in his support for the Nigerian military, the Russians were right there to supply as many arms as Lagos needed to finish off Biafra—for the sake of influence later on.

Having covered the famine in Ethiopia myself, all this has a familiar ring. In Ethiopia, there were two break-away provinces, Eritrea and Tigre, which together accounted for half of the famine victims. But international aid at times was running 9-1 in favor of the starving on the government side. While the Ethiopian government, with Soviet support, was strafing relief convoys with MIG-23s and poisoning wells in drought affected areas, U.N. and other officials were advertising the Ethiopian government's concern for the welfare of its people. But at least the rebels in Eritrea and Tigre had a left-wing reputation to draw on, which won them a lot of help and sympathy in Western Europe. The Renamo guerrillas fighting the internationally recognized government in Mozambique are less fortunate. Pity the starving children in Renamo-held areas, whom almost nobody seems to care about. One lesson of Jacobs's book is that there should be fewer pious pronouncements about the rights and wrongs of each particular secessionist struggle, and more efforts to get food to famine victims trapped in rebel areas, whether the recognized governments like it or not.

—Robert D. Kaplan

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Federalism: The Founders' Design. Raoul Berger. *University of Oklahoma Press, $16.95.* Berger began his scholarly career with an insightful study of the history of impeachment, moved on to a provocative book on the Fourteenth Amendment, and has now turned to the subject of federalism. This latest work, however, lacks the plausibility of a good legal brief, failing to pass what lawyers call "the straight face test" (i.e., could you get up in court and make this argument with a straight face?).

Berger's view of federalism is unusual, to say the least. Like Calhoun, he contends that matters of inherently state and local concern are absolutely beyond federal regulation. Very little that the federal government has done since Roosevelt would pass muster under Berger's test.

Even the least controversial of *nineteenth* century legislation is too much for Berger. For example, he argues that the Supreme Court erred in 1903 when it upheld congressional power to ban the interstate transportation of lottery tickets. Congress has no right to interfere with "WINGO!". Presumably, federal narcotics laws are equally unconstitutional. And, not one to shrink from the unpalatable consequences of his thesis, Berger expressly states that federal food and drug laws are unconstitutional. Protection of public health is, after all, traditionally a matter of state concern. Therefore, he reasons, it is none of the federal government's business, for the founders, he says, "sought to preserve an independent, 'inviolable' sphere of action" for the states.

Berger argues that the Fourteenth Amendment, which he views as very limited, did not change the importance of state sovereignty. He fails to recognize, however, that his vision of sovereignty died on the fields of Gettysburg, well before the Fourteenth Amendment was proposed. To win the Civil War, Lincoln had to go far beyond the narrowly circumscribed powers Berger allows the federal government.

Given Berger's view of the Constitution, the South probably had the right to secede. After all, the Constitution does not expressly deprive them of this right, nor does it give the federal government any express power to oppose them. This argument was made by President Buchanan. Luckily, Berger wasn't around to advise President Lincoln to surrender Fort Sumter.

Given his unswerving devotion to original intent, Berger would probably not shrink from the conclusion that every law passed since 1860 was unconstitutional. There is something admirable about his willingness to follow an idea wherever it leads, even to the point of total absurdity. But it is this passion for consistency that separates Berger from the Framers he so admires. They were intensely practical men, whose highest goal was not abstract consistency but good government. They would have been appalled at Berger's fanaticism, as they disapproved all deviations from balanced good sense.

The idea that the Framers have important things to tell us about the meaning of the Constitution is not a monopoly of the Meeses and Bergers. For those of us who continue to attach some importance to the views of the Framers, however, this book is a considerable embarrassment.

—Dan Farber

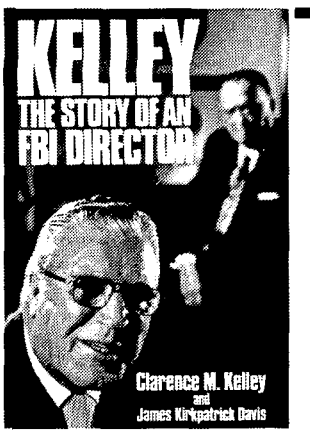
Steering the Elephant: How Washington Works. Robert Rector, Michael Senera, eds. *Universe, $24.95.* The essayists in this volume are true believers, ex-Reagan officials and conservative academics, who know how hard it is to run the federal government (hence the title) and who want to pass their vision on to the James Watts of tomorrow. You wouldn't think liberals have much to learn from the likes of Jeane Kirkpatrick and Bruce Fein, but they would be wise to listen. These essays would help President Dukakis as much as they would President Kemp.

While they cover everything from sweet-talking the Washington press corps to manipulating statistics, one theme prevails: don't rely on career civil servants. For instance, the former director of the Office of Personnel Management, Donald Devine, found provisions of the Carter-era Civil Service Reform Act that allowed him to pepper the bureaucracy with loyal Reaganites. Not an appetizing thought, but with the same cunning a liberal administration could stir up backwaters like the Nuclear Regulatory Commission and give us all a more effective and compassionate government.

—Peter Mooney

Straight from the Heart. Roger D. Hatch, Frank E. Watkins, eds. *Fortess Press, $18.95.* For researchers and academics this is a valuable book. Here is a collection of some of Jesse Jackson's speeches, interviews, and opinion page articles since 1976. For a general audience, attracted to the book either by an interest in Jackson or his politics, however, this book is like flat ginger ale.

The flavor and pizzazz of Jesse Jackson, the flash and daring, are not on view here. Jackson is the best political orator in the country. This book does not convey his skill as a speaker, his intonations, his rhythms and the passion he can arouse in a crowd. Speaking in person, Jackson moves facts towards



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a crescendo that demands change. He does not explore political concepts or make arguments. On paper his speeches suffer terribly for that absence. Instead we see a steady retreat into the "motherhood and apple pie" troika of "justice," "peace," and "equality." The book makes a reader wish he had bought a tape instead of a text of Jackson speaking.

—*Juan Williams*

Democracy Is in the Streets: From Port Huron to the Siege of Chicago. James Miller. *Simon & Schuster, $19.95.* Students for a Democratic Society, whose name is curiously absent from the title of this history of its founding, today stimulates the urge to debunk. It's hard to see why it deserves the immense respect it's accorded from both left and right as a potent political force. What did SDS do, exactly? It was only a minor participant in the civil rights movement, which stands as the great example in modern American history of the power of nonviolent direct action. Its main activity (aside from a lot of theorizing) was a series of community organizing efforts in ghettos that had no lasting effect. It is most famous for its role in the antiwar movement, but, as James Miller demonstrates here, the war swelled SDS's membership rolls just at the moment when it was falling apart as a real organization; anyway, the war that SDS supposedly helped end went on long after SDS had become defunct. SDS wanted to establish a lasting student movement in this country, but today places ranging from West Germany to Korea to Mexico have vastly more active left-wing student movements left over from the sixties than the United States does. To the extent that SDS helped to polarize the country in general and the Democratic Party in particular in the late sixties, it may have held back the achievement of its policy goals.

This book is written from the assumption that SDS was a major political movement—is there any other left-wing group whose meetings, manifestos, and internecene squabbles would attract the attention of a big commercial publisher like Simon & Schuster? There's a sense among people between, say, 35 and 45 that the importance of SDS is so obvious that it doesn't really need to be established. But Miller is so thorough and so intellectually honest that he does also shed considerable light on what SDS really amounted to. In conception, SDS was most noteworthy for being an organization of the left that simply didn't care about socialism. This was due mostly to the influence of Tom Hayden, who is the hero of this book. Coming out of a nonpolitical midwestern background, Hayden was motivated by moral idealism, not by hatred of capitalism; in an early draft of the Port Huron Statement, he had a line praising small business for being anti-elitist. On the other hand he infuriated SDS's original parent organization, a rabidly anti-Stalinist branch of the International Ladies Garment Workers Union, for consistently refusing to issue blanket condemnations of the Soviet Union. Michael Harrington, a fascinating secondary character here, was furious at Hayden for allowing a young American communist to attend the Port Huron conference as an observer.

Not surprisingly, given that they were adolescents, all the early SDSers saw radical politics as, perhaps primarily, a means of self-discovery and self-expression. Port Huron took place very much in the long shadow of the fifties, and the participants were convinced they were being groomed for the kind of conformist society that one sees described in the work of C. Wright Mills and David Riesman. Getting thrown in jail in the South was a way not only of helping people but also of taking the personally liberating step of burning one's bridges to the organization-man life. In a way, the road from Port Huron to the human-potential movement—a road that several of the SDS founders traveled—was a perfectly straight one.

The great theoretical banner under which SDS marched, "participatory democracy," was, as Miller shows, not very well defined. SDS never knew exactly what kind of society it was trying to create; Hayden could go from meeting with Averell Harriman or Robert Kennedy in Washington to delivering a pep talk to the Weathermen in Chicago before they embarked on the pointlessly destructive Days of Rage. The part of the participatory democracy ethos that has lasted is the notion that the famous consensus politics of the fifties was excluding too many people; the crucial flaw was the conclusion that therefore mainstream American politics was never to be trusted. SDS was fatally drawn to the establishment of political entities with no connection to elective politics, and these were terribly prone to sectarianism and had little chance of surviving when the radical mood of the sixties faded. Oddly, SDS's greatest legacy today is probably the vague but pronounced influence its ethos had on baby-boom politicians like Gary Hart, Albert Gore, Jr., and Joseph Biden (the opening line of the Port Huron statement is, "We are people of this generation")—not the strength of the alternative political structures it spawned. Standing apart from politics was SDS's great mistake.

So SDS's real contribution was a style, not an organization or a program. That's nothing to be dismissed out of hand. The best parts of the style—the feeling that some things are simply wrong and should be opposed for that reason, and a deep respect for individual rights—inevitably led SDS to early positions on the right side of such major issues as civil rights and Vietnam. SDS proved, too, that American radicalism need not be tied to European socialism or Soviet communism. Youthful idealism unfettered by ideology can be a powerful force for good, and we ought not let SDS's inglorious end in factionalism and violence lead us to lose sight of that today.

—*Nicholas Lemann*

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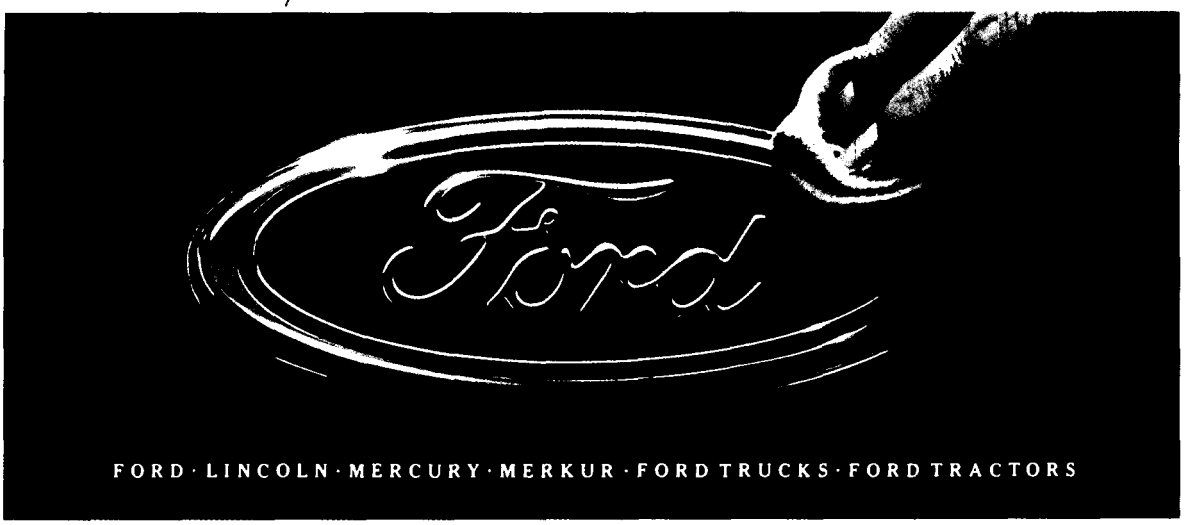

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